



HM

Alternative Music Magazine

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As I Lay Dying
MUTEMATH
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Christmas (December 2011) • Issue #151
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IN ABSTRACTION



DECEMBER 6

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Did God Wipe Out a Race of Giants With the Flood?

Hollywood Screenwriter Pens
Controversial Noah Novel

“Reads like a Blockbuster Movie!”

— Ralph Winter, Producer (*X-Men*, *Wolverine*)

In an ancient world of darkness, fallen angels breed giants and enslave mankind. Noah has been prophesied to save humanity from the coming destruction of this evil. But Noah's wife and son are captives of these dark forces – and he's not going anywhere without them.

Brian Godawa, award-winning Hollywood screenwriter of *To End All Wars* with Kiefer Sutherland, and author of the popular book, *Hollywood Worldviews: Watching Films with Wisdom and Discernment*, has combined his cinematic storytelling with his worldview insight into a fast-paced Biblical epic novel.

Noah Primeval is a fantasy retelling of the beloved story of Noah for lovers of Narnia and Middle Earth.

Special appendixes provide the biblical research behind this imaginative interpretation of the Nephilim, the Sons of God, Leviathan and more!

See the trailer: www.noahprimeval.com



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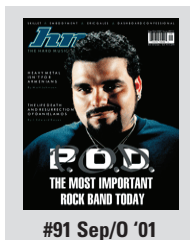
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From the editor

Doug Van Pelt

THE FIRST ONE IS FREE

Merry Christmas, my music-loving friends. This special edition "Christmas" (December) issue was an impromptu thing on my part. After I closed the door on print (hopefully temporarily, but realistically, I don't know if we'll print again ... but more on that later), I thought of all the great bands that were coming out between the last (Oct/Nov/Dec) issue and the January (first monthly) issue. Bands like In The Midst of Lions and MUTEMATH and As I Lay Dying... I figured some of that info would be old by January and decided it'd be a good time to post a special December issue, load it up with a Gift Guide (which is usually real popular with advertisers and publicists) and then give it away for free – to maximize the exposure and the "newness" of the all-digital issue. If you've never been here before, it is a new experience, huh? So, the first ever special edition of HM was born.

I never knew it would come during a house renovation, move and a Thanksgiving holiday time, but I had to put the deadline for this issue down for a good week or two right as I was getting close to finishing it. Now is as quickly as I could get it done (with a lot of hard work and heartache). You'll see that the release date of *Rock Stars on God, Volume 2* was delayed as a result, too.

Okay, now that we are in the "all digital" age here at HM Magazine, I'd like to ask for your help on a couple of things. First, I want you to relax and enjoy HM Magazine again without the burden of trying to help keep it in print. That battle's been lost (at least for the time being) and we're moving forward. I hope that you can really enjoy what you like about HM Magazine. Now, here's a couple things I'd like your help on:

One, if you haven't done so already, sign up for our email list. This will be the quickest and most efficient way to keep up with what we're doing, as we will include any important announcements in the "e-nouncement" section of our weekly e-newsletter. This is where you will hear about the availability of a print edition option per issue that we are hoping to contract with a print-on-demand place (like lulu.com). More info on that will be forthcoming.

Two, please pass along the link for this free December issue digi-edition of HM Magazine. Let people know that they can get HM Magazine on their computer and mobile devices. Please help introduce us to a new audience.

Enjoy God, enjoy music, enjoy this issue of HM and let us know what you like!

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SPINNING AT HM NOW

JOSHUA RIDDLE	<i>Furious</i>	I'm picky when it comes to worship. I like-a-this.
MILJENKO MATIJEVIC	"Hallelujah" single	A <i>Rock Star</i> take on Jeff Buckley's classic tune.
MUTEMATH	<i>Odd Soul</i>	This album sounds great turned up loud.
BENJAMIN DUNN &...	<i>Circus of Love</i>	See why they're a Pick of the Litter this issue.
THE VIOLET BURNING	<i>The Story of Our Lives</i>	Wow! So much good music (on 3 discs)! Loving it all.
JOSH GARRELS	<i>Love & War & the Sea...</i>	What a great singer and storyteller.
AS I LAY DYING	<i>An Ocean Between Us</i>	I just love that "Separation" guitar intro!

Letters to the Editor

HM



REACTIONS TO GOING DIGITAL

Oh boo! Thank YOU for all that you do. There are very few outlets that feature the harder side of Christian music, so hats off to you. I'm sure the digital transition will be a smooth one and down the line I'm sure things will go as you've planned. You always have my support, and I look forward to continuing to work together.

—Ashley Di Buduo, via email

You have absolutely nothing to feel down about! You have put out sooooo many issues and out lasted sooooo many others. We're in a changing industry and we can't help it! Always been an HM fan, and I will continue to be. You should for sure pick up the new 'print' edition of *Magnet*, it went digital for almost 3 years, but is now back in print. I'm sure you'd appreciate the "letter from the editor" in it.

—Jeff Cloud, via email

While I hate to hear it, the businessman in me says, "Yea, I don't blame you. Change is difficult for anyone, but especially for something you created and poured your heart and soul into for so long..." but as seasons change, so does the world we live in. The only constant is the never-changing Holy God. He remains, but methodology does change. So, for HM, I guess this should not be a surprise, and you did not fail or lose ... you sought the Lord, worked hard and produced a product that you are proud of and has raised the bar in this industry. I hope and believe that will continue in the digi-editions also. Be blessed.

—Alan Howe, via email

Wow! Thank you for the iPad giveaway. More importantly, thank you for all you have provided with HM mag. It's not just a magazine for some people. PS — I enjoyed *Desert High*.

—Ryan Jones, via email

Hey Doug, while my guess is this wasn't your preference, it is totally the right move. You have my total support. Personally, I prefer the digital format. Keep it up bro!!!

—David Aaron, via email

This is good news and I know it may be harsh, it is the future. You have been great to me through the years!

—Dayna Ghiraldi, via email

As sad as it makes me to hear this, I know HM will continue to do what we do, just in a different format. I think everything will end up being okay. I really hope I can stay on and keep writing when needed!

—Reggie Edwards, via email

I'm rather sad about the passing of HM in print, but I totally understand. I pray that someday, Lord willing, it will come back. My reasons for advertising in HM are somewhat mixed. I always knew that the music I play probably doesn't appeal to the majority of your readers, but I always saw an increase in listenership right after an issue came out. The main reason I advertise, when I can, is because I feel a personal connection to the magazine and the community you serve. It started when my oldest son played with Dizmas and then Memphis Belle. You were always cordial to him on the rare occasions when he actually met you. Daniel always loved HM, and you actually wrote about his band on a couple of occasions. I still remember when they had the big accident in Oregon and you carried my description of what happened verbatim on the HM website. And don't worry if you don't remember any of this. The important thing is I remember. And then there is the fact that you cover what no one else covers. And even though there's a lot in HM that I skim over, I am still a subscriber, because I believe in what you are doing even if it seems irrelevant to me at times.

—Mr. Bill, via email

HOW TO GET THOSE PASSWORDS?

I'm kind of bummed you're going out of print, but considering the struggles you've been dealing with, I'm not horribly surprised. My question to you in this is what are you going to do about getting the login info to those of us who have been focused more on the print version? Previously I've had to email you whenever I've wanted to browse the online mag instead of a more automated alert when the new issues come out. Also, are you going to extend the archives further back than 5 issues (I understand that is over a year now, but it is nice being able to go back to previous interviews to compare the band's views)?

—Chris Wilcoxon, via email

Ed — You've been reading the digi-editions for a while, cuz you remember when we changed the password for each. For the past 1.5 years, though, we started keeping the username & password constant (your e-addr). There's a page at HMmag.com linked at the top called "New Issue" (hmmag.com/new-issue), where you will always find a link to the current/latest issue (as well as links to the archives, which go back to '07). Of course, if you have any trouble logging in, email me at service@hmmag.com

FANZINE TO GO WAY OF BUFFALO?

I was just wondering, since HM is going digital only, if we will still see the *Heaven's Metal* fanzine in print form? It is sad to see HM go out of printed form, since I have kept every issue since I started my subscription back in high school. (Wow that's like 20+ years!) I am excited to see what God will bring about in HM's future. Doug, this "baby," which God blessed you with and by which you have blessed many people, is just going through another stage. Hopefully this change will allow for growth and the ability to do many more things. Keep up the good work. God Bless you and HM.

—Dan Forsberg, via email

Ed — Lord willing, the fanzine will stay in print (as long as it keeps breaking even I wanna keep it so).

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SCRIPTURE

The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, "Do not write 'The King of the Jews,' but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews." Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written." (John 19:21-22)

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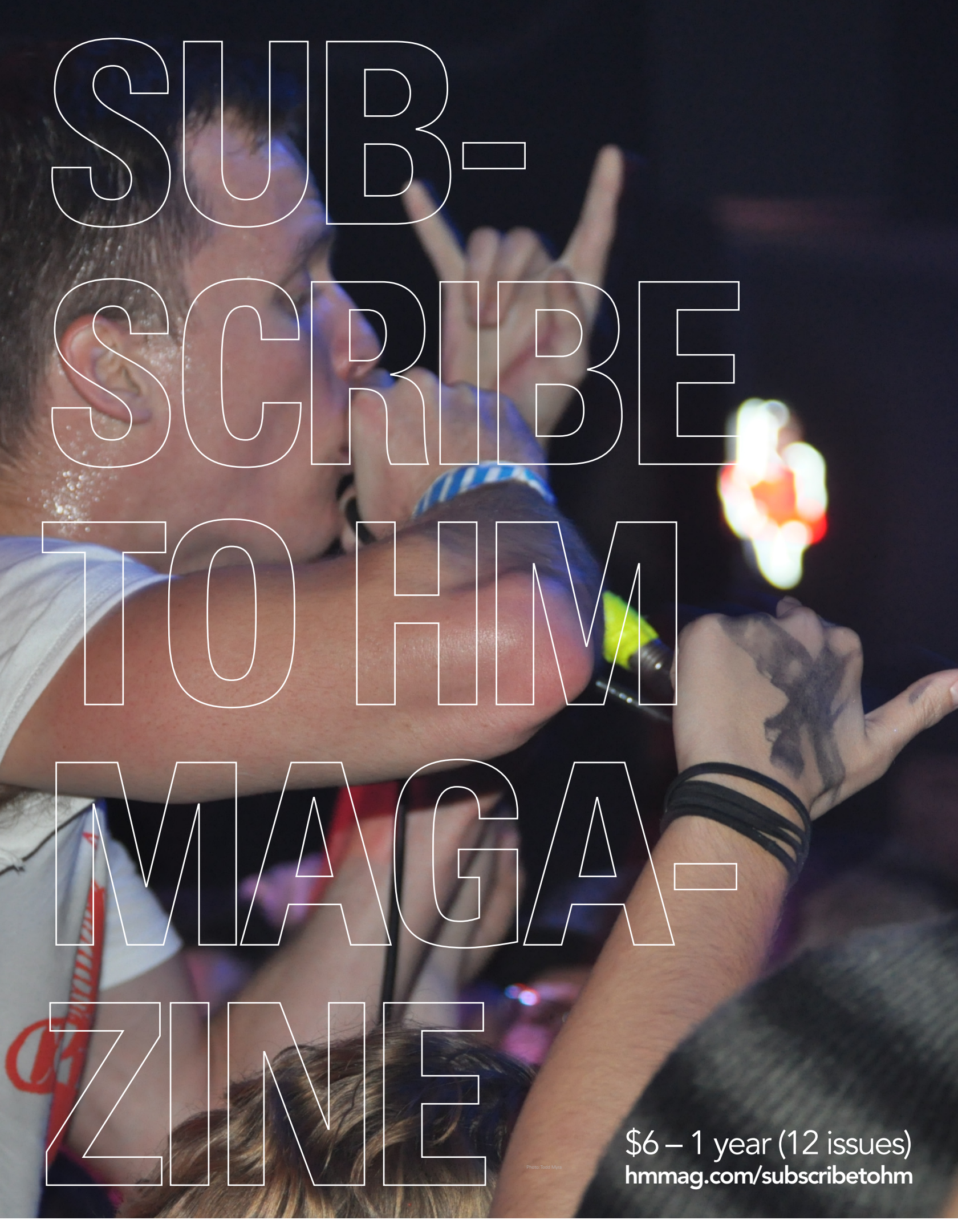
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HM Magazine (ISSN 1066-6923) is no longer printed in the USA, however, we are looking into having each digital issue available for custom printing at a "print on demand" place. Refer to the editor's blog and hmmag.com/new-issue for breaking information on this opportunity to hold a copy of HM in your hands.

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HARDNEWS

Quick & concise

News bullets

The Great Transparency is ready to begin another busy month this December beginning with their three week-long tour with Please Promise. November included a two week tour in Florida, a music video shoot, their second radio release entitled "Chaos Parade" off of their new EP, and of course some time home for Thanksgiving. With November behind them, The Great Transparency is ready to begin yet another eventful month.

While **Plumb** is busy preparing her 2012 release *Faster Than A Bullet* she has still found time to not only record 2 Christmas songs – she's giving them away. Fans who "like" the Plumb Facebook page are able to download the two songs free by clicking the "FANTastic Christmas" link on the page. The song "What Child is This?" was recorded by longtime collaborator Matt Bronleewe, and her original Christmas song "It's Christmastime" was recorded with David Arnold.

Switchfoot has been busy touring its *Vice Verses* album. Recently they played their new hit single, "Dark Horses," on *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*. Check out video of the performance at: <http://bcove.me/btw23xf7>.

Owl City is about to give the world an All Access pass into one of his headlining shows from the *All Things Bright and Beautiful World Tour* with the release of *Owl City – Live from Los Angeles* DVD. This DVD will feature over 90 minutes of live performance, behind the scenes footage, exclusive interviews and more. Filmed at LA's Club Nokia this past July, the full 21-track concert will be released on iTunes only on December 6th in North America. The DVD and Blu-Ray versions, to be released worldwide on February 7th, 2012, will include bonus features (backstage footage and an exclusive interview) in addition to the concert. Fans can view the trailer for the DVD at <http://itunes.apple.com/us/movie/owl-city-live-from-los-angeles/id479115367>.

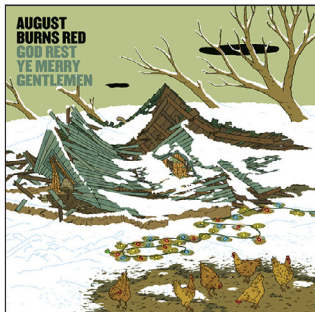
Just in time to bring the holiday spirit to a club near you, **Deas Vail** is excited to kick off a trek of November / December dates with Sick of Sarah and Now, Now deemed the *Oh Christmas Tour*, with their new four track holiday EP *For Shepherds & Kings*.

HAWK NELSON SINGER FLIES SOLO JASON DUNN NOW TRACKING

Jason Dunn, vocalist for Hawk Nelson has set the wheels in motion to record and release his first solo album. The project will go under the name Lights Go Down. Studio veteran Steve Kravac has been selected to produce, engineer and mix the release, which will be entitled *Abandon Progress*. Dunn's solo project has been on deck since 2010 and with sessions now locked down for the month of January 2012, his vision is about to become a reality. Drummer Justin Benner of Hawk Nelson will also be participating in the sessions. Information on a street date and label partner for the project will be released shortly. Recording will take place in Vancouver B.C. at Profile Studios and mixing is scheduled for Hipposonic which is the former home of the iconic Mushroom Studios (Heart, Bachman-Turner Overdrive, Sarah McLachlan).

ABR RELEASE CHRISTMAS SONG BAND CONTINUES HOLIDAY TRADITION

Following their annual tradition, juggernauts August Burns Red have unleashed their latest rendition of a Christmas classic, this time tackling holiday favorite, "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen." "The past few years the annual ABR Christmas songs haven't been nearly as 'metal' as 'Carol of the Bells' was," explains guitarist JB Brubaker. "When writing our rendition of 'God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen' I wanted to write a more traditional metal song. Something less artsy and more in-your-face. I am confident that 'God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen' is easily the most metal Christmas song we've ever done. While recording it I was thinking 'this song sounds straight 80's metal' which amused me greatly." The track is available now as a digital single or a limited edition colored vinyl 7" through the band's former label, CI Records, and can currently be previewed at the band's Facebook page.



Becoming the Archetype change its architecture

Becoming The Archetype are making monumental changes to its lineup: "If you haven't heard about the official announcement of lineup changes within BTA," guitarist Seth Hecox states, "I'll give you the lowdown here: Jason and Duck are out. Chris McCane is in (he was our fill-in vocalist all year). Drummer is lined up, but not announced yet. Bassist is close to being confirmed. We're meeting again with him in a couple days to make sure his theology is identical to ours so we don't have anything to discuss spiritually on tour," Hecox laughs. "Becoming The Archetype has had new members on tour for practically this whole year. We played over 80 shows in 12 different countries in just an 8-month span. We also wrote and recorded "Oh Holy Night" and have orchestrated a series of remixes to be released early next year. BTA also has a lot left to say musically. Everyone got a small taste of Daniel's songwriting capabilities on *Celestial Completion*. He is a fabulous guitarist and screamer and has a good singing voice to boot. He's already started writing some riffs for our next record and I'm way into them. He and I will be working a lot over the next few months to craft the music of the next BTA album.



Industry Profile: Jay Harren

INDUSTRY VETERAN JAY HARREN LAUNCHES DOWNTIME, AN INNOVATIVE WAY FOR ARTISTS TO USE A BIT OF THEIR FREE TIME TO BENEFIT A CAUSE THEY BELIEVE IN.

A former A&R manager at Columbia Records in New York (Harren signed the critically acclaimed band, Manchester Orchestra, and pop group, Hey Monday) and made his start in radio. Some artists that are already involved with Downtime are Manchester Orchestra, Anberlin, Mayday Parade, Grouplove, Hey Monday, Butch Walker, Sleeping at Last, The Starting Line, We The Kings, AWOLNATION, Charlotte Sometimes, Kevin Devine, Matthew Mayfield, Aaron Gillespie, Feather & Belle, Zach Williams and the Bellow, etc. You can check out this video that explains it all, here: www.mydowntime.com

What inspired you to start this organization?

I was in London touring with one of the bands I signed to Columbia, and I noticed how bored they seemed when they were in between shows (traveling between venues, waiting for soundcheck, waiting for their set time etc.). It occurred to me then that perhaps an impact for social good could be made if these artists used some of that downtime to help a cause they wanted to support. I sat on the idea for a couple of years while gaging interest from various artists and managers, and then I finally made the move from Columbia to pursuing Downtime full-time.

What are your hopes for the future of this thing?

It's three-part goal: 1. Give artists something good to do while on or off the road—something to fill their downtime, 2. To make a difference for whatever cause they've been paired with, and 3. To encourage and mobilize fans towards action – to try to get them to go from hearing about a cause, to actually participating in whatever it is the artist is doing. Additionally, we also plan on moving into other channels of entertainment – film/tv sports, personalities – eventually we want Downtime to be something everyone identifies as something they can personally use for the greater good.

What are some amazing stories that you've seen or the artists you've worked with have done/witnessed?

Anberlin has really gone the extra mile by using their time in several markets to do hands-on work with charities like Habitat for Humanity and Feeding America. They even invited fans to come and work with them – basically re-invented the meet and greet – which is something we'd like to do more of with our artists.

How does faith intersect with this help?

We welcome people of all faiths to get involved with Downtime. Ultimately, we just want to help others use their time for the greater good. Some of our artists might pick a faith-based charity to help, and that's great – it's completely up to the artist.

Expounding on the previous question, how does differing, sometimes conflicting faith (or lack of it in the case of an atheist, for example) coexist or interact with this thing?

I think everyone, no matter what their faith is, recognizes the need to do something good for others – for the world at large – whether it be simple things like raising awareness for a cause, or donating money, or doing physical labor as in the case of Anberlin. Doing good for those who need it transcends faith. Everyone can find common ground there.

How do you pick a non-profit to benefit?

We ask the artist to choose a cause to support. If they don't have one, we recommend a few that we have relationships with based on what might resonate with the artist. If someone, for example, has a history of cancer in their family we might recommend a charity like The Pablove Foundation or the I'm Too Young For This Cancer Foundation. Everyone has a different story and background, and those stories inform what cause they want to support.

How does an artist get involved?

When we started, we sought out artists to get involved, we still do that, but now they're coming to us, too, which is great. Emailing me (jay@fairfightmusic.com) is the best way.

It seems like the logistical details are many with this thing... What does it take to pull this off?

A lot of what our bands do is social network-based, so it's up to them how much work they put into it. When an artist wants to really get their hands dirty, though we have a (very) small team that helps set everything up for them. I'd never turn down initiatives that artists want to do just because it's logistically hard – it's all worth it in the end.

Facedown Records has released another cool free sampler. The fall/winter '11 sampler includes songs from brand new albums like **A Plea For Purging** and **We the Gathered**, unreleased albums from **In the Midst of Lions** and **A Hope for Home**, and recent releases from **Hands, Hope for the Dying**, **Gideon** and lots of others. Download the sampler now at the label's facebook page: facebook.com/facedownrecordsinc

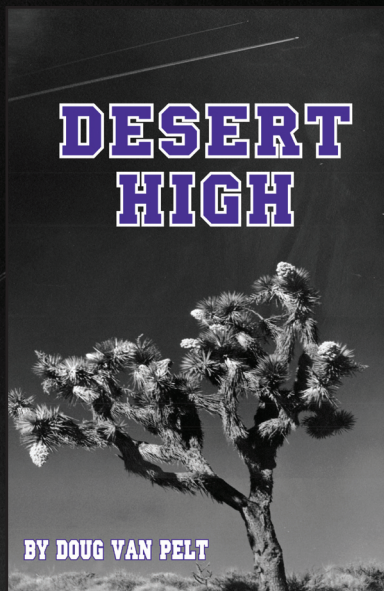
With Increase, hailing from Tampa, FL, are among a new breed actively picking up the torch of Spirit-filled hardcore. On their debut EP on Blood & Ink Records, *Signs Of The Time*, they demonstrate their incredible talent for balancing a melodic hardcore intensity with something more raw and, at times, almost desperate. The result finds the band clearly drawing influences from contemporaries, yet still creating a sound uniquely their own.

The Way is releasing its second album *Helpless But Not Hopeless* on Thumper Punk Records. This powerful album includes seven songs that blend their classic punk sound with an ounce of the blues and metal-tinged riffs. The band is influenced by Social Distortion, Rise Against and Pennywise.

Close Your Eyes have released a new music video for "Keep The Lights On" that comes off of their latest effort, *Empty Hands and Heavy Hearts*. Vocalist **Shane Raymond** said of the video, "I wrote that song knowing I was being in this place of everything that I despised, and running away from all of the things I know that I should be ... and to 'keep the lights on,' because I know there's still hope."

Florida melodic hardcore outfit **Rejoice The Awakening** are releasing its sophomore EP album titled *Many Waters / Many Floods*. Producer Brian Hood (A Plea For Purging, Gideon, Hope For Dying, As Hell Retreats) recorded and mixed the 5 song EP at 456 Recording Studio in Huntsville, AL. Lead singer Nick Baily says "This album is about forgiveness because you can't love someone until you've forgiven them and you can't love yourself until you look past all of your mistakes and let them go."

BY DOUG VAN PELT



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HM Editor Doug Van Pelt's first novel

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Wishing You a Blessed Christmas
and
New Year



LIVE REPORT

ACL Festival
September 16 - 18

REVIEW & PHOTOS BY DOUG VAN PELT

(Austin, TX) This hip and eclectic festival celebrated its 10th year in existence this year and it went off without a hitch ... and a lot of people had a blast.

Cold War Kids had a large and happy crowd swaying with their melodic tunes, which only felt better with the nice breeze on a lovely Austin afternoon. Multiple percussion, like a shaker here and a cabasa there, add some subtle spice to their thick grooves. Everyone picks a first set to begin their festival experience and this was my choice. It seems like the band has gotten less angry and more laid-back as they've perfected their songwriting craft, but they still have their moments of angst and tension. They'll kick back and settle into a groove and let that move the song along, but never lose the audience with meandering or wandering jams. The vocals and the instrumental parts serve the songs really well. Their set ended with several gems in a row: "Skip the Charades," "Louder than Ever," "We Used to Vacation" and "Saint John."

Mavis Staples wowed an overflow crowd in the Vista Equity covered stage with her seasoned, veteran yet still as-soulful-as-the-day-is-long music. Her voice still comes from a place deep inside, even though she's some 72 years old. A consummate performer, she extolled the virtues of Austin and the loyalty she has for her Chicago home. She spun "The Weight" as if it were her own early on in her set, telling the audience about "pulling into Nazareth" and promising that taking a load off Fannie would be "putting it right on me." Then, to end the set she was able to bring the house down with her mega hit, "I'll Take You There," which she flat-out owned.

J. Roddy Walston & The Business was my "wake up and smell Day 2" moment on Saturday and it was a doozy. Whether it was rocking along with the piano during "Don't Break The Needle," the cover of Little Richard's "Lucille" that they played or letting the slide guitar shine bright in "Use Your Language," this band lives up to their name and brings the fun in a serious way that's business-like. Obviously, they're as fun to watch as they are to listen to.

Daniel Lanois' Black Dub was one of those special bands that you hope to find at a festival like this. *Austin City Limits* prides itself in hand-picking artists with special performance qualities. While you will catch artists with big radio hits, you'll pretty much never see someone that doesn't know how to deliver in a live setting. This legendary record producer brought his latest musical experiment to the fest and, after a few pregnant minutes after their designated set time came and went, they



launched into an atmospheric and jam-based set that worked. With a steady beat drummer (Brian Blade) at stage right, Lanois played guitar at center and vocalist and part-time second drummer Trixie Whitley and bassist Daryl Johnson flanked to his left. During tunes like the bluesy "Last Time" the slender Whitley would handle most of the lead vocals. At other times she'd jump on the small drumkit at the back of the stage and sing. After three songs she left the stage and Lanois stated, "and so ends the cinematic portion of the set." A song later Lanois sat down on the steel pedal and played a dreamy instrumental. "After referencing Jesus he sang about "...still so much work to do." It was a pretty hypnotic show. Nothing too flashy, save for some awesome guitar work, but quite good.

Not to be forgotten, **The Lee Boys** laid down some awesome pedal steel guitar playing, doing right by the Sacred Steel movement.



Photos (clockwise from top): Trixie Whitley whines; J. Roddy rocks; Mavis Staples; Daniel Lanois staring down the lens.

Album: *A Warm and Dark Embrace*
Label: independent
Release Date: January 2012
Members: Ryan Helm, vocals (+ hired guns)
RYL: Meshuggah, Soilwork, Korn

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DAMIEN DEADSON

It's common sense that by now you should know the name Ryan Helm. Your eyes might have witnessed him on stage swinging his dreadlocks while playing guitar for Demon Hunter and The Ascendicate. However Helm will be shining light on a new open door in his musical career and entering in will be Damien Deadson (DD).

What started out as an idea back in the year 2009 has now become a reality. A reason this band means a great deal to Helm is because it is in his full control. Before hiring musicians for the band, everything was written and recorded by Helm, except the drum tracks.

"I own my own recording studio so I was able to sit down and track the record whenever inspiration hit me," said Helm. "The Ascendicate is currently inactive and Demon Hunter took most of 2011 off due to touring all through 2010. That gave me all of this year to record and get my mind in the right place so I could focus solely on writing this new record. I wanted it to be something I could be very proud of and at the same time show the world what I have to offer not only as a musician, but also as an open minded, caring and loving human being."

The first album release will be titled *A Warm and Dark Embrace*, which has a due date in

January of 2012. A great historical and personal touch has been put into the titles that represent this band. In the view of Helm, DD slightly means "Through my destruction I have been liberated." A Hindu story about a black goddess named Kali is what the name of the album is based out of. In this story Kali is the goddess of time and change and those who embrace her develop change and liberation in their lives. Those who avoid her see her as a vengeful and appalling force. Helm took this close to heart and related to his convictions.

"A lot of people are afraid of change, because they are afraid of what they can't see and don't know. People want security, comfort, and a nice little path to walk down to guide their way so they don't get lost. The security people desire really only makes them weak and more likely keeps them from fulfilling their full potential. Excellence comes from change and taking chances, not making safe choices."

It was not an easy process for Helm to reach what he has now accomplished. When DD first started, he was dealing with his demons. It seemed for Helm that everything he had worked for was falling apart. While being in the midst of separating from his wife, dealing with troubling family issues, being financially broke,

emotionally and spiritually broken, Helm still took it upon himself to gather himself up and reflect why things were the way they are. He soon found out that he didn't truly know who he was inside

"I began to change myself and who I was. I began to question everything I knew and believed and reassessed why I believed it. This meant looking for God in different ways with a more open mind. Most importantly, I started living my life the way I wanted to. Through this transformation I needed an outlet and Damien Deadson was that outlet. The sound of it has evolved so radically over the years, because as I grow and change, so does the music."

Although Helm has been offered from labels to get the band signed, it is not in his interest at the moment. However a tour will begin in January right after the album is released independently. Also in the works are ideas for music videos and which song will be the first single.

"I can't wait to get on the road and see everybody. Damien Deadson will always be a band that strives to encourage and lift people up. This is a band that accepts everyone for who they are and hopes to encourage them to continue to grow stronger in themselves."

Album: *Empty Hands and Heavy Hearts*

Label: Victory

Release Date: October 25, 2011

Members: Brett Callaway, guitar/vocals; Tim Friesen, drums; Shane Raymond, vocals;

Andrew Rodriguez, guitar; Sonny Vega, bass/vocals

RVL: Oh, Sleeper, The Devil Wears Prada, Counterparts

facebook.com/cyeband

CLOSE YOUR EYES

West central Texas is home to a lot more than just a lot of flat land and cattle.

Brought together by pure coincidence, Abilene, Texas natives, Close Your Eyes, are continuing to make waves with their newest release, *Empty Hands and Heavy Hearts*.

Six years ago, vocalist Shane Raymond and guitarist Brett Callaway met by chance while they were students at Hardin-Simmons University and immediately started to round up musicians to finish their lineup.

"It actually has to do with the t-shirts that we were wearing," Callaway said. "I was wearing a Dillinger Escape Plan shirt, and Shane was wearing an As I Lay Dying shirt. And we just started talking from that, and it just kind of led to where we are now."

The band doesn't identify with being a Christian band, even though all of the band's members are Christian. Callaway said he doesn't want their faith to become a business concept.

"We don't call ourselves a Christian band just because I see bands out there that use that as a way to gain fans and as a way to get ahead business-wise," he said. "So we just don't ever want that to be part of who we are."

Both of the band's albums are filled with

inspirational lyrics, and according to Callaway, those lyrics are for the fans.

"It definitely comes out of what our want is for our fans; just to help them through struggles and trials and to let them know there's people there to help them and that there's always hope," he said.

After three and a half years of being unsigned, the band decided to sign a deal with Victory Records. Despite Victory's controversial past, Callaway said it didn't sway the band one way or another, and as a band, they decided to come into the Victory showcase with an open mind.

"We went up there, met everybody and we liked everybody a whole lot and we just decided that that was the way we wanted to go," Callaway said. You hear that stuff and I think that maybe it made us be a little careful. It didn't turn us off because you hear that stuff, but there's always a second side to everything, you know? And it's not like that controversy doesn't happen at other labels. It's just it was more public with Victory."

Callaway said if anything, it made the band more cautious, but it didn't sway their decision.

Upon signing with Victory, the band released their first album, *We Will Overcome*, a

hardcore testament with clean riffs and inspirational lyrics.

On October 25th, the band released their sophomore album, which is a departure from their first release. Callaway said most of the songs were written within a month and a half period in late March through April while they were home from tour. He also said this newest release is a departure from their debut album.

"It's definitely a little more punk rock than *We Will Overcome*. I think the songwriting is a little more mature, and a little more progressive in the melodies and the harmonic structures," Callaway said. "I mean, it's the same genre for sure, and it's still Close Your Eyes, it's just has a little bit more of punk rock feel to it."

Callaway said the band will continue a headline tour in the U.S. and Canada and then tour with Norma Jean at the end of the year. Despite efforts to find out where Close Your Eyes will be during the New Year, Callaway was elusive.

"We have some offers for tours for early next year, but we haven't confirmed anything yet," he said. "So I don't know exactly what we'll be doing, but we'll definitely be out on the road."



Album: *The Eyes of the Wicked Will Fail*

Label: Rottweiler

Release Date: August 12, 2011

Members: Mark Baker, bass; Joseph Bellmer, vocals; Cliff DeWeese, drums; Derrik Young, guitar; Riley Snyder, guitar

RIYL: As I Lay Dying, Black Dahlia Murder, Lamb of God, (early) Impending Doom

facebook.com/beholdthekingdom

BEHOLD THE KINGDOM

"Behold the Kingdom of the dead that rise again!" a proclamation of the dead in Christ rising in reference of God's Kingdom. This being the death-core anthem to Behold the Kingdom's final song "The Valley of Elah" from their debut release. It kind of sums up who they are as a band, the reason they perform. It is rare in this day to find a band that really has their chops up and are very ministry oriented. Behold the Kingdom is one of those.

This Ohio-based quintet features Riley Snyder and Derrik Young on guitars, Mark Baker on bass and Joe Bellmer on vocals. Founding member and drummer Cliff DeWeese, laid down the drum track for the new recording on Rottweiler Records. He has recently left the band. The new collection *The Eyes of the Wicked Will Fail* was released in August of this year, presenting ten brutal songs inspired by bands like early Impending Doom, Black Dahlia Murder, Job for a Cowboy & Sleeping Giant.

Behold the Kingdom started in 2007, when Cliff and Riley began taking their faith seriously. They left secular bands intent on playing for the Father. The guys teamed up with two others and Arelim was formed. A year later Mark and Derrik replaced those members and they changed their name to Behold the Kingdom. They went through a couple vocalists until Joe finished up

the current line up in early 2010. Derrik says the name describes what they want to do, "Like the Kingdom of God ... our goal is to bring Jesus everywhere we go, to bring heaven wherever we go."

It was last spring when Behold the Kingdom was asked to play a show with Grave Robber at the Vineyard Café in Bellefontaine, OH. At that time Grave Robber's lead singer, Shawn Browning, had just launched his new label Rottweiler Records. He was very impressed by their live show. He told the band it was obvious they were very serious about ministry and he appreciated their level of professionalism. It was just what he was looking for. A few weeks later after prayerful consideration, contracts were signed and Behold the Kingdom became the second official signed band to Rottweiler.

The band agrees the new record is brutal and quite graphic. But they assure us that even the most graphic of lyrics come straight from the Bible. The title, *The Eyes of the Wicked will Fail*, comes from the book of Job.

Behold the Kingdom's attitude and influence on the local scene reminds us of Stryper in their early years. They impress with their musical ability, their

stage presence and they speak boldly of Christ. They have lots of respect from non-Christian and Christian bands and fans alike. For them it is always about ministry, being a light to a broken world, then almost equally important is to play a brutal tight show with lots of stage presence. They will rock your face off, then preach the word; no matter where they are playing – whether bar or Christian club. And people still love them. That could be because all the guys are very relational and easy to like. One minute they are having a light saber duel with a fan, the next they are praying with or encouraging someone who is struggling.

Their live shows are what must be seen. These guys are true entertainers. They are constantly on the move, doing scream and response with some of their anthems, songs loaded with breakdowns and change ups. Mixed with both clean vocals and low growls only deathcore fans appreciate. Mark Baker adds, "And lots of hair whips!" They know how to have fun, yet when it's time to be serious they lay it down dark and heavy. If they come anywhere close to you, do yourself a huge favor and go.

Album: *Outlaws and Prodigals*

Label: ANGR

Release Date: November 22, 2011

Members: Barry Mackichan, vocals/bass; Ryan Guerra, guitar

Tyler Wells, drums; Dougie Parker, guitar

RIYL: Saosin

kiros.com

KIROS

"The picture was very much impromptu," explains frontman Barry Mackichan. "We were walking around the mall with the photographer, and the workers were packing up the display. We told them what we were doing, and they were happy to volunteer the snakes. These snakes are pretty harmless, especially with the handlers present. At one point, one of the snakes was wrapping itself rather inappropriately high around my leg, so we had to remove it and reposition it. We've had a few questions and comments (and concerns) on the symbolism of a snake in this picture, but really there was none. Just seemed like an epic idea."

Tell us about these new songs.

"Outlaws and Prodigals" is about the internal struggle inside of us. I wrote this very much as a reflection of what was and is going on inside me. This song is a conversation between a voice inviting us to decide (verses and bridge), and a person trying to sort out who and what we are (chorus). Our souls are a battleground where we will wrestle with good and evil, and must take a side. The great invitation is to surrender and find rest in God, discovering surrender brings us peace and the greatest victory possible – finding true life. Musically and lyrically, there is a bit of an old western theme. We tried to paint a bit of a picture of a old west gunfight between the chord choices and the lyrics. "Desperation Calls" is a transitional song. It starts off with a confession of brokenness and resolves with a sense of feeling complete. This song is about the journey of redemption, which is a journey I'm still in the middle of. We believe in a God who rescues the lost and broken and desperate. These two of the songs will be on the full-length, and the third is an acoustic version of "Outlaws and Prodigals" that is only on the EP. Picking which two to use for this was a hard choice. We have a full-length that we are really proud of, and we wanted to reintroduce ourselves with this EP more as a limited preview.

How did the process of signing to ANGR go?

After talking to a lot of labels over the last few years, ranging from majors to indies, we felt ANGR seemed to have a better grasp on what we were trying to do than anyone else. They approached us, not looking to change what we were doing, but to come alongside and help take it to the next level. So far we've been really enjoying being a part of the ANGR family. It's great to have their whole team behind us, believing in us. We feel like we have a ton of support from them, and we're both really excited about the future!

What are some words of advice on how other bands can do what you've done (please share your secrets or, if you don't want to, that's okay..).

Never ever wait for someone to do something for you. Go do it yourself. Book your own shows, get your music recorded, fund raise however you need to. Pour your heart and soul into it, because no one should believe in what you do more than you. Our management team and label came to us, because we were already doing so much on our own, it gave them something to work with.

What does the next 6 to 9 months hold for Kiros?

We will be releasing the first radio single off the record in the next couple months, then we've got a tour in Europe for most of January, followed by a full USA tour with Red and Thousand Foot Krutch from February to March (which will be our CD release tour). We've got some stuff in the works for after that, hoping to do a follow-up USA tour and a Canadian tour before the summer festival season hits. The goal is to just keep growing.

Funniest on- or off-stage moment from 2011?

A lot of the highlights, including Kiros vs. Nair, beard duct tape rip, tennis ball sling shot, wire whip and fish slap are all chronicled in our video blogs on our YouTube channel (youtube.com/kirosband). It seems like something happens every day, so it's hard to pick a favorite, but these videos are some of the best.

How does a young man become or grow as a disciple of Christ while being in a touring rock band? Any advice, etc?

We try to sit down together on a regular basis as band and crew, to connect, pray, do a bible study, have accountability, etc. That's been really good for us spiritually and as a team. We also try to get to church every Sunday. I download sermons off of iTunes, and I read a lot while in the bus. You have to be intentional and disciplined, because there are a million distractions while on the road.

Anything else you'd like to add?

We've been big fans of HM Magazine for years. It's a huge honor for us to find ourselves in these pages! Thank you!

Album: *///*
Label: iTooth & Nail
Release Date: October 18, 2011
Members: Solomon Jerome Olds (Soul Glow Activatur), vocals/guitar; Jacob Olds (Crouton), drums/vocals; Joshua Olds (Fatty), bass/vocals; Nathan Currin (Nadaddy), keys; Derek Mount (Chap Stique), guitar
RYL: 3OH!3, The Maine, Cobra Starship
familyforce5.com

FAMILY FORCE 5

Alexandra Leonardo: "If this new album were a person, what would they look like?"

Soul Glow Activatur: "It would look like a red-neck version of Lil' Wayne, maybe?"

Chap Stique: "That's pretty good! I said Michael Jackson with a little BBQ sauce on his shirt."

Soul Glow Activatur: "...and Toby Keith's goatee."

If the fact that the band members have super legit names didn't catch you off guard, I'm almost positive the response to that question did. With the release of their southern-crunk album, *///*, comes a more grungy, more down-to-earth, group of "Kountry Gentlemen."

Family Force 5 is known for their mad dance moves, killer props, and beasts at having a good time. Because of this, they've landed several group awards. Hoping for a successful future with the new album, Soul Glow, real name Solomon, predicts they'll at least win the award for the Best Band Named Family Force 5. He adds, "Yeah we'll probably win Best Band That Wears Cool Gloves on Stage and will be asked as a group to get on Dancing with the Stars." When asked if they watch that show, Chap Stique, real name Derek, passionately states, "We don't watch it, WE LIVE IT."

On the new album, Family Force moves on from heavy dance beats and touches on other music

genres. Solomon explains, "I think we strive to not make the same record over and over again. We want to evolve. We want to come up with new music. If we wanted to do the same record over and over again, I would get bored." Even though dub step is everywhere now, Family Force grazes it on their "Dang Girl" song and introduces Spanish-style music in their "Mamacita" song. Solomon describes, "Yeah, we started playing around with it and it's actually fun to play live! Like people love (Derek interrupts shouting, "Aye, aye, aye!"). Like I want to see burritos and salsa being passed around, you know?" Derek ends the comment by saying the fans should bring props like burritos, sombreros and other things to their shows. So everyone, get ready.

Before Family Force kicks off their Christmas Pageant tour with Hawk Nelson, they're doing an "It's All Gold" tour, which is showcased at smaller venues. They're going back to their old roots with jam-packed shows and meeting all their fans. The boys recall shows so packed that by the end of the show, everyone was on the (extremely small) stage and they had to stand on the speakers. Derek also recalls his first SXSW and how small that stage was. "Yeah, it was at a place called The Chugging Monkey, which that stage was hilarious. Basically you're talking about there is no stage. And I ended up running onto the balcony and just kind of staying up there with the people, playing and watching the band while I was rocking out there. It was pretty fun." Solomon excitedly

comes in, "I love SXSW! I almost got arrested for jumping a fence to try to get into a Kanye West show. I was like "I am not waiting in this line anymore," so I hopped the fence and the cop got me. I didn't go fast enough. But the cop let me off, so it was okay. I like it though. I mean, you see amazing DJ's, amazing bands, and colorful people, you know? And people get too drunk to walk around. That's always funny."

Even though these guys are party masters, they touch on a serious note in their song "Paycheck." Both guys' advice is to stay at home as long as you can to save money (Don't worry—they didn't move out until their mid-twenties). Derek says they made the song because it's powerful and they knew a lot of America could identify with money issues. "And what I like about the song is the bridge. The part where the singer, Soul Glow over here, says 'Don't be afraid. Everything's going to be okay. I found some change.' There's a little hope in realizing that money isn't why we're here. And 'I found some change' I think has a really cool meaning of going deeper than the physical change."

Photo: Michael Todaro

Album: *Live in Concert*
Label: BEC
Release Date: August 23, 2011
Members: Chris Greenwood, vocals; Josh Macintosh, guitar;
 Mike Crofts, bass; Travis Blackmore, drums
RIYL: Decyfer Down, Skillet, Red
manafest.net

MANAFEST

"Hey man, could I get a ride to the Exhibit Hall over here?" Drenched in sweat was the hip-hop artist known as Manafest. It was a good chance for me to tell him how much I appreciated his fusion of rock and hip-hop and share my heart about how I feel like Christian hip-hop gets treated like trash in the Christian music industry and I'd like to help solve that problem. Appreciative of the ride and the comments, he thanked me and we didn't talk again ... until this interview.

How did you record your live album?

First I'm proud to say it was inspired by Johnny Cash's *Live at Folsom Prison*. I had a guy come in with a rig, using a Pro Tools setup with live mics, and ran a feed off the board at the show. We had a blip at the beginning of the intro and had to stop to make sure everything was recording properly (laughs). That freaked us out. I had it mixed/mastered by Adam Messenger – that's why it sounds so good!!

If hip hop gets treated like a red-headed stepchild (especially in the Christian music industry), why is this so? What are the root causes for some of this? How can these things be overcome?

You couldn't have said it better, I get treated like royalty now that I roll with a band

compared to an iPod or DJ in the Christian industry. In the general market bar scene there's no real difference, but yeah, it's funny how there are niches within niches. Like the black gospel churches have totally embraced Christian hip hop and it's done great, but the whole Christian Festival CCM market has not. My advice to any hip hop artist that's a Christian would be to focus strictly on mainstream and cross it over. That's what my friend Shad K did in Canada. He sells out 4-600 sized mainstream venues, and does really well. It's all how you approach it and market yourself.

Why do you infuse elements of rock into your sound?

The rock elements have always been there, I've just finally let the animal inside of me out! I find with rock I can express myself in a way I couldn't translate over hip hop style music.

What are some of the ways you envision your material when coming up with songs? Take us through the construction of at least one song from A to Z, if you will.

Well I just came up with a topic last night for a song for the new album about revenge. First I write a bunch of different

phrases, thoughts and ideas I have about the title or topic. I can then mess with some melodies and try to come up with a strong chorus or words that would get the main point across. I'm then going to pitch the idea to my producer and he will help me develop it, re-write parts and write some music for it. Record vocals, destroy and rebuild maybe, then mix/master and done.

What are some of your favorite artists and bands? Why?

Beastie Boys, Linkin Park, Michael Jackson, Rage Against the Machine. I love the attitude expression of the Beastie Boys and that they're not scared to try things. Linkin Park – I love the music and the way they write lyrics addressing certain subjects really grabs me. Michael Jackson is a hit machine and again I love the way his music speaks to me. I love the aggression and rawness of Rage and how it isn't over produced but so hypnotic and memorable.

Anything else you'd like to add?

Thanks so much, new album comes out early Spring 2012 while on tour with RED/TFK

Album: *Heavy Worship*
Label: ANGR
Release Date: July 12, 2011
Members: Justin Singh, vocals; Angela Razo, guitar/vocals;
 Billy Sweet, guitar; Victor Cota, guitar/vocals; Solomon Joy, bass; Alonso Azofeifa, drums
 RYL: Sleeping Giant, xDeathstarx, The Gun Show, A Day to Remember, For Today
myspace.com/thegreatcommission

THE GREAT COMMISSION

One night not too long ago, The Great Commission front man Justin Singh traveled to Riverside, CA to see contemporary worship artist Phil Wickham. During the show, Singh says Wickham just went with the Holy Spirit. Wickham started playing a little interlude and made up lyrics on the spot.

"There was about 6-700 people singing to Jesus with all they have, spontaneously, at the top of their lungs and I thought that was the heaviest thing I'd seen in my life," Singh says. "I was like 'Man, this is amazing to see this happening at a contemporary worship show. I wanna see this happen in the underground, in hardcore shows.' I thought that was a heavy thing, one of the heaviest things I've ever witnessed."

Singh brought this experience back to his band mates in The Great Commission and they tried to partner what was going on there with heavy music, put them together, thus giving birth to their latest album, *Heavy Worship*, which was released in July.

Heavy Worship was kind of the icing on the cake for an impressive year for The Great Commission, one that has seen a lot of the time and work they have put in paying off. "The year has been incredible," Singh says, "this is the year our new album came out. We waited two years before signing to a new label, before putting out any new material. So that's always a scary thing when your band hasn't really ... I mean, we consistently toured *Every Knee Shall*

Bow, but we hadn't put out any new songs and waiting on God, to be honest, to open up a new opportunity, to open up a new door.

"We had some offers from other labels here and there, but I guess we were just waiting on God to be like 'This is the one I want you on, this is destiny.'"

"When that offer came, everything just came together perfectly. We had our album at Cornerstone, told the label to start selling them there, got to meet a lot of people who still support the band over the two year period and the album came out a couple days after that, I believe. It's doing incredible, doing a couple hundred a week, we couldn't be more happy. And what's cool is that people are finding worship out of it and that means the world to us.

Heavy Worship shows the band experimenting with different sounds from their debut record, *Every Knee Shall Bow*, an album they wrote as a side-project band. One thing that is very evident is that the album is much more melodic than the debut.

"The album is a lot more melodic and has more singing and a lot of different aspects to it, and if you listen to the songs," Singh says, "not all the songs sound similar to each other. They may be structured similar, but musically they're different and we just spend that time. I spend that time

in prayer about lyrics. We wrote that album collaboratively in that we wanted to reflect where we were at that time so each song, I feel, has its own emotion."

The band may be called The Great Commission, but the band's name is not merely just a name. In fact, during the recording of *Heavy Worship*, the band got a chance to put their name to work with an unlikely person.

"We recorded with a guy named Andrew Glover, who's in a secular band called Winds of Plague, and we recorded in his studio in Rancho Cucamonga," Singh says. "He's an atheist and it was kinda cool for us to write worship songs in an atheist studio. It was kinda funny, because at one point, he also did the new *Sleeping Giant* album, so we were saying he's America's number one Christian Atheist producer, which we thought was pretty cool.

"We got to share a bunch of our views and beliefs, when I was tracking vocals he'd be asking questions like 'What does 'Let the dead bury the dead' mean' or what does this mean or that mean? So, it was cool to be able to explain that to him and a lot of our views on religion and Jesus, he was really turned on to those ideas. I feel like just the culmination of who he was and the culmination of his thoughts and ideas and our music and our involvements put together, really created *Heavy Worship*."

Album: *Patterns*
Label: Tooth & Nail
Release Date: November 15, 2011
Members: David Josiah Curtis, vocals/guitar; Neil Endicott, guitar/vocals;
 Paul Stewart, bass; Matt Jackson, drums
RYL: Relient K, Hawk Nelson, Thousand Foot Krutch
runkidrun.net

RUN KID RUN

With one thought of the word “pattern,” I am immediately drawn back to childhood years of colors, shapes, and the product of predictability. Flash cards with numbers and blank spaces appear as I rummage through the amalgamation that is my memory, preparing the way for an ill-fated socially driven lifestyle. Residing in a world that we were not meant for teaches you how to live according to a certain pattern and reoccurring rhythm, conformity if you will. The musicians of pop punk band Run Kid Run have been fortunate enough to escape this reality, pushing forward to a growth simply described in Romans 12:2: “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

With the release of their third full-length album, entitled *Patterns*, Run Kid Run sprints toward renewal in every way. Frontman David Curtis expounds on this topic in describing the writing process of the record. Though there was no specific initial intent upon starting the process, Curtis describes, “As the songs came together, we realized there was this common theme that was happening throughout all of the songs where we were talking about the struggle of being stuck in the pattern of this world. We took *Patterns* from the Scripture in Romans.

It’s all about Him. If it’s not, then it’s just another rock band that’s really not going to make a difference.”

Besides taking steps in spiritual maturity, RKR has evolved musically and lyrically. With the help of talented outsiders such as Aaron Gillespie, Matthew Theissen and Mark Townsend, RKR has learned that collaboration is not so frightening after all. “Growing up playing in punk rock bands, collaboration in song writing was a bad word. We’ve definitely evolved as artists. The RKR artist perspective and the matching up with an artist that you respect, coming up with something you never think of ... was awesome.” Along with bringing in these personable talents came the inclusion of new instruments and various techniques. “We had live strings on our album, we attempted to put the accordion in ... and in one song we were tracking the piano and he (Mark Townsend) was spinning the microphone back and forth over the piano as Neil was tracking the piano, so he gets a wobbly, old-fashioned, out-of-tune piano sound.”

After five years, three full-length albums, marriages, struggles and life changes, the guys of RKR have been living out the truths that they so often speak out on in

their music. “We try to be just as sincere as possible. I think God wants us to write from an honest perspective of what we’re going through and how we see it through a Christian lens. I think each of us, individually, have our own walk with the Lord. I’ve been really striving and pushing forward with my prayer time, which has just been so rewarding. If I want to grow in my walk with the Living God, I need to pray and talk to Him. That’s one small step I’ve recently been taking and really enjoyed it.”

Interrupting the pattern of life is not something you are taught or even shown in modern society. It is something you are born with, an inner groaning indicating that you were not made for creation but rather, Creator. Run Kid Run is on the cutting edge of redefining that same pattern that is often found in today’s pop rock bands, and running towards the unpredictable glitch in the pattern. “It’s all God speaking through us, not us. But whenever those moments happen it’s just beyond amazing, because then you know you’re doing it for something better than rock and roll, which will fade away.”



Album: *The Death of Greeley Estates*

Label: Tragic Hero

Release date: October 11, 2011

Members: Ryan Zimmerman, vocals; David Ludlow, guitar; Chris Julian, drums; Kyle Koelsch, bass; Brandon Hackenson, guitar
RIVL: The Irish Front, blessthefall

myspace.com/greeleyestates

GREELEY ESTATES

The Death of Greeley Estates is a blend of previous albums, with hard-hitting drums, and chords, to “creepy” sounding vocals, and eye opening lyrics. Behind every album there are always influences, stories and experiences. The band has gone through an amazing evolution over the years, from playing on the MySpace stage in Long Beach, CA on the *Taste of Chaos Tour* to touring around the world and reaching new limits and staying true to themselves.

“When we were going into production we talked about it. I liked the *Go West* sound, even though I didn’t help write it. I was the assistant engineer, and then going into *No Rain* I missed parts of *Go West* with Ryan’s real clean voice and some of the color notes of *No Rain* for this album.” David Ludlow the guitarist explains about the inspirations for the new album and the blending of albums. “We are as much fans of music as we are of the people that write it. So when we look back at our CD’s we want (them) to be something new and fresh, and not purposely shock people, but show our growth. For *No Rainbow* we definitely wanted to shock people, and have people go, ‘Wow! What happened?’ With this album we wanted to take all the things we liked about the other albums and blend them.”

If you’re a fan of GE then you know what the lyrics are like. But if you are just getting into the band, you might be shocked at how colorful the lyrics are and how honest and emotional they really are. The first track is called “Straightjacket” and is about a person stuck in a straightjacket and screaming his thoughts. “Ryan watches a lot of horror movies, and we will watch them while we write. We don’t write about specific ones, but the lyrics are very specific for Ryan. He gets a lot of storylines and things coming together from there and he just puts them in his own words.” Not that horror movies are the only inspiration for the album, musical influences range from Mars Volta to Deftones. “If someone puts something together that is (done) really, really well, I want to match it. ‘How can we get that sound, but make it sound more Greeley?’ So we listen to all kinds of genres and figure out things we like, and try to make them sound Greeley. Ryan has a very specific voice, so we write to the way his voice sounds. We try to keep it sounding creepy, because Ryan’s voice sounds really good when it is creepy. The minor tones just sound really great with Ryan’s voice.”

For hardcore fans of the band, the album cover is a logo the band has used for years. With the album’s title and the recognizable image is it truly the end of Greeley Estates?

“It started out as a tongue and cheek thing. It is in a sense up to the fans if they want more music, and with the way the economy is, and the state of the industry, and music just kind of falling apart... It was kind of just funny for us to call it that. More and more we think about it and put it together (and) it was matching what we really think it is.” Talking about all the albums coming to one blended style. “If it is our last effort we are really happy for it to be our last effort. But now that we are weeks into it we are obviously going to do more music. It isn’t our last album. It’s just the original first face with *The Death of Greeley Estates*, because it’s totally a different sound and we are a different band than before. The band has gone through different line-ups and we have always taken the albums and made it our own sound. So we wanted to combine them and call it that.”

“In this scene there are a lot of bands that play the sound that they are supposed to play to sell records. They go through all the motions to get the fans and the promos.” There is no autotune, they don’t care what is hot, and they don’t care what is supposed to sell. Greeley Estates only cares about being Greeley Estates – creepy, honest, and always a fan of their own music.

Photo: Merek Davis

Album: *That was Then, This is Then (7")*

Label: Roxx

Release Date: April 3, 2012

Members: Butch, bass; Gene, vocals; Bob, drums; Bradford, guitar

RYL: Flipper, One Bad Pig

lustcontrol.com

LUST CONTROL

You might think that xDeathstarx is the most straight-edge band in Christian hardcore for having 24 members, but you are wrong.

Lust Control is one of the leading straight-edge Christian hardcore bands ever next to Sexually Frustrated. These guys go beyond the three X's. They are ain't drugs, drinking and sex before marriage. They have added another X, artificial sex, which is masturbation.

Having a somewhat normal life span of six years as a band Lust Control has been a long lost relic in Christian straight edge. The band may seem kinda cheesy with how they come off. They are addressing issues that I have never heard from a Christian hardcore punk band. Issues like a father sexually abusing his daughter and forcing her to keep it a secret.

The biggest and main issue for Lust Control is sexual purity. One of my favorite songs is "Finger." Not just for the sweet thrash elements, but the opening line: "Get your hands out of her pants. Get your hands out of your pants." It is one of the biggest challenges for guys – being in a serious committed relationship with a female (and) not taking it too far physically. I have been there before and in the end it tore

me apart and I did not recover emotionally and spiritually for a year.

The church has a hard time addressing two things: sex and money. These are the two things that are meant for good, but as Christians we have a hard time not letting the lusts of both control our lives.

Lust Control I think are the forefathers of Christian straight-edge. I am glad that five dudes agree with me and have worn the mantle proudly of addressing the hard issues. Those dudes make up the band I mentioned earlier – Sexually Frustrated. I am glad that Lust Control are back, and I can't wait to see what the future holds for them. Their singer Gene knows all too well what is right and what is wrong with the scene. He has been documenting it for twenty-six years. So, get ready for some more heavy issues within our scene and within the world to be brought to light by the underdogs themselves – Lust Control.

The band plans on recording "Finger" and other new ones early in 2012. Roxx Records, in the meantime, plans on releasing a 7" vinyl of old songs as a teaser for the upcoming album on an undisclosed label. "We're talking to three of our friends that run labels and each one is willing to release a new album. We'll wait and see."

Album: *Epic*
Label: Whiplash
Release Date: September 27, 2011
Members: Shawn Cavallo, vocals/guitar; Michael Cavallo, guitar;
 Keith Comer, drums
RYL: Newsboys, Altered, The Cars
manicdrive.com

MANIC DRIVE

In this day and age of a single-driven industry, where what flavor is popular today is over-saturated with cypocats tomorrow, it seems like it's all flash and no substance. One hardly ever hears the phrase "artist development" anymore. Well, as a casual observer, it's been fun and rewarding to see this band develop and grow over time. Most bands, it seems, would have broken up a long time ago. Good things come to those that persevere.

So, how was it working with the producer for *Epic*? He's done Justin Bieber...

Michael Cavallo: Working with producer Rob Wells was an incredible experience. He really dove into the project, lending his own unique dynamic, giving the music an even greater depth. Some of his most recent work did include A-list pop/rock artists such as Justin Bieber, Adam Lambert and even Cyndi Lauper; working with that caliber of producer is definitely, creatively thrilling. We honestly felt he took *Epic* to an entirely new level and expanded our world of music.

It's been exciting to see you guys progress from the days of *One Cross* to now. I remember seeing a showcase gig by y'all at GMA a few years back and noticing how you've really become professional performers onstage, really putting out a good show. To what do you attribute your stamina?

Thanks! Over the years we have grown musically and creatively; the fans are a real inspiration to always innovate! Even since the

One Cross days, we've always been believers in the ideals of showmanship ... delivering a show of theatrics and compelling energy, wanting to give it our all. We have added CO2 shooters, confetti canons, wacky wavable tube men, and recently purchased rotating platforms to add to the energy. In the future we hope to add even more antics.

What have been some of your favorite experiences as a band?

We have had the amazing opportunity to travel Europe a few times, and each and every time it becomes more breathtaking. As fans of history, fine arts and food, we always look forward to traveling overseas to explore different cultures. Recently stateside, we had the opportunity to perform in front of 1,100 American troops at Fort Leonard Wood, MO. The Army asked if we would perform for them on a Sunday morning during our *Tear Down These Walls Tour*. We had no idea what to expect! The soldiers filled up this great hall at the fort, sat down in formation and looked as intimidating as ever. The sergeant welcomed us on stage; they hit the lights and allowed these little Canadians to give them our all. The response was unforgettable! They roared, giving us a standing ovation, saluting, shouting and applauding. After the performance, many of the soldiers lined up to shake our hands and thank us for taking the time to drop by and perform... We should have been thanking them! We were so overwhelmed by the experience a couple of us got emotional (including me). Later they awarded us with military coins. That is an experience I will never forget!

What are your goals for Manic Drive?

We would like to see Manic Drive continue to stretch musically and grow to new heights as a band continuing to tour for years to come. We have learned to wear many hats in this industry; my brother (Shawn) and I have built a studio in Toronto to record, develop and consult young artists. We are developing as artists and emerging as businessmen. Shawn is an excellent young producer and had significant influence on *Epic* as well as our other albums. He and I currently write for other artists between tours, and we enjoy it immensely. We truly hope to be involved with music for many years to come.

What's on the horizon for you guys the next few months?

We are already planning for an exciting 2012! Having just finished a fall run with the Newsboys, Manic Drive is headlining the *Epic Tour*, featuring Tooth & Nail/BEC Recording artist Bright Shine Baby in Jan/Feb 2012. We are in negotiations for another national heavy hitter Spring tour and have already lined up a handful of other spring and summer dates... We love playing summer festivals! Our current single is "Halo" with (the) followup single "Save a Life" going for adds at radio and TV in January.



Album: *Opposition*

Label: Strike First

Release Date: July 19, 2011

Members: Seth Munson, guitar; Mike Searle, vocals; Ben Reno, drums;

Canaan Smith, guitar; Brock Williams, bass

RIYL: The Ghost Inside, A Plea For Purging, Gideon, Stick to Your Guns

facebook.com/altarshc

ALTARS

Altars is a Canadian hardcore band that just signed to Strike First Records, who released its *Opposition* EP this past summer.

Out of curiosity, what is this one big *Opposition*?

Canaan: Basically, it's referring to the struggle that young people go through in today's world, where they feel like they're supposed to be something. They're pressured by older figures in their life and pressured by the media to be kinda like a stereotypical 20-ish year old person and basically the whole EP deals with the personal struggles that Mike has had, and looking on the positive side of things instead of staying negative. So, the *Opposition* is us being positive towards negativity.

Mike: Finding hope, even in a not-so-hopeful time.

So, music-wise with this particular project is there any influences you had?

Canaan: When we wrote the EP, Ben and I who wrote most of the music were listening to a lot of Stick To Your Guns, The Ghost Inside and Architects and lots of bands like that. Now I listen to Peter Dinklage.

Seth: We mostly listen to radio pop in the van, we don't really listen to a lot of metal.

Mike: Acoustic stuff

Canaan: So the EP was all influenced by that kind of stuff, but our new stuff, which is going

to be coming out, is going to be different.

Aside from the *Opposition* theme, were there things lyrically that you wanted to touch on?

Mike: Canaan kinda touched on it before, but basically I was going through a lot of thoughts and a lot of emotions in my life and there was things going on with friends and things going on with society that I perceive in a certain way, and for me it seems like as Christians it's a really dark time – especially for being our age. There's a lot of rough things going on for people that are in our demographic and that encompasses the whole EP, really. I watch a lot of things happen and I go through a lot of things that make me think. One of the songs on the EP is called "Advocate," and it's kinda hard to be a Christian band these days, and a lot of people look down on it. There's a lot of people who support it and it's awesome, but there's a lot of people who won't go to a show because it's a Christian band. So, with things like that, I feel like it's a dark time for Christians that are our age; and Christians of all ages really, but finding hope and trying to see the best of what's going on for us as Christians, as young people and as people growing up and playing music there is light that I see, and that's what it's all about, and that's what we're trying to spread in everything.

That actually is one of the questions that I was going to ask. What would you say to a non-Christian about your music?

Canaan: What I would say to a non-Christian

is that there is definitely elements that – if they choose to not see the Christian side of it – they could take, such as the positivity that would be easily taken from any aspect of life. It's just a matter of staying positive and finding hope no matter what situation you're in and – whether that hope comes from Jesus Christ, like it does for us, or whether it comes from yourself, or whether it comes from your friends, your family – it's just a matter of finding hope and that's what the whole EP is really about.

What I've found is that there's usually there's two types of bands: there's Christians that are in a band, and they're just members together doing it, or they're doing it as the band being the focus of a goal, project or message. Would you say you fit into that?

Canaan: I would say that the band is definitely driven by our unified belief in Jesus Christ and that is our main goal – to spread light, but we're not specifically trying to spread light to just Christians. We're definitely reaching out to other groups. We're trying to reach out to everyone.

Now what is it like being on Strike First? Do you feel any different?

Mike: Yeah. There's more respect.

Seth: For our band, in general.

Goodn

THE FINAL

After Advent rocked the stage they had their final bow and said their goodbyes to their very dedicated fans, we had the honor of interviewing bassist Johnny Smrdel about the many years spent on the road with Advent.

Nick Cotrufo: *What is the official reason you guys are calling it quits?*

Johnny: It's just life man! We're all in different places. I'm married now with a wonderful daughter, but our breaking up isn't a sad thing. It's just time. It's over. Everyone's just in a different season. We all still love each other.

Matthew Leonard: *Tell us some things that you've seen on tour that you'll never forget?*

Johnny: Greenville, South Carolina. The first time we played there. We were in a skate park in the middle of a half pipe and when we started playing the place just erupted. The Spirit was there. The kids were there and totally on fire and you could just feel it. This place felt dark and empty, but once we started playing you could totally feel the Spirit move.

Nick: *What is your all-time favorite tour you've been on with Advent?*

Johnny: We toured with Underoath and that was the only time we had ever been on a big tour and it was awesome! If you ever interview big bands like Underoath that complain, Stop the interview! Life is so easy for big bands. People were bringing stacks of clothes to Underoath, loads of food, people packed up the equipment. It was literally the easiest thing I've ever done.

Matt: *Most of us know that you were in Beloved back in the day. You guys then started Advent relatively fast. What were your influences for Advent?*

Johnny: Well Beloved always had this dynamic of Josh who played guitar and sang and Dusty played guitar and they were more into rock. Joe and I were more into metal. Those two dynamics coming to one made it heavy but with melody. When Beloved broke up we were like we don't want to stop playing music. Beloved ended January 15th (I think) and we started writing songs for Advent like at the beginning of February. Up until a year and a half ago we practiced twice a week and wrote so many songs for Advent.

Nick: *I'm a huge Beloved fan. I've watched the Kiss It Goodbye DVD more times than anyone should ever watch a DVD.*

Johnny: We had some big plans for that, but the dudes who did it kinda ripped us off. There were supposed to be interviews in there and things like that, but they just put in some funny things. It was all

funny, but we weren't a joke band. It made us come off as a funny band who loved to party which we're not. We were a band on a mission. The last show was almost too big. To this day I wish we had done a secret last show with just our friends who had helped us from the beginning.

Nick: *How have you seen the scene change over the years?*

Johnny: Oh it's growing, but it's empty. I'm going to be brutally honest. I don't think that hardcore should be a job. I think there are bands that are doing full time and they're just using it to make money on a scene that's supposed to not be about the money. I think that there are a lot of empty bands that are making so much money. They get on stage and just lead people astray. Actually, this is what inspired the song "Pack of Fools." They parade around to get girls and money — it's just plain empty. These bands they

use women and influence women to do things that are sinful and it makes me mad. To sum up, it makes me sick and mad to think about.

Nick: *The band on stage has the ability to influence the crowd and I see a lot of bands use that to promote sinful actions.*

Johnny: Exactly.

Matt: *What are some successes and failures of Advent?*

Johnny: Well commercially and financially we're a huge failure. We were a failure to Solid State, which (I think) is why they pushed us to the side. We didn't want to go commercial and so I'm proud to be a financial failure! Successes? Meeting people that have changed my life! I've seen God use me in ways that I don't deserve to be used. God is so good. I hear kids say that they rekindle their relationship with God by hearing us! But it's not us, it's God using us!

Nick: *What are your plans after Advent? Music projects?*

Johnny: Well, Joe is working with The Almost right now. Jordan, our drummer, has actually started this cool ministry at his church. Mike is in two awesome



ight, goodbye

WORDS OF ADVENT

ADVENT 25



bands. I'm a husband and a father which takes a lot of my time. A friend and I are opening a clothing store. It's simple workwear everyday kind of clothes. It's a simple idea, nothing really special. Of course, I will always do music.

Matt: What are some favorite food stops you've been to on tour?

Johnny: Oh man I've found some amazing places! Well I'm vegan, Joe loves meat, Jordan's been kinda cruising on the vegan train. Philadelphia, there's a place called Black Bird, incredible. Chicago Diner was one of the best vegan restaurants you will ever go to. Even if you're not vegan you will love it! In San Antonio, Green Café. Somewhere in California there's a place called Scoops. It's like an artisan ice cream shop. I could keep going on man I love food.

Nick: What is the weirdest thing you've seen an Advent fan do?

Johnny: Well it's not weird, but it's cool, like, when someone gets something Advent-related tattooed on themselves. I wish I had a funny story, but most Advent fans are fairly normal people.

Nick: You never have anyone trying to impress you? (points to my Beloved shirt)

Johnny: Haha! Love the shirt. Funny story actually. The other day I was driving with my daughter in the car listening to something crazy, and I was thinking to myself I haven't listened to *Failure On* in over a year and I didn't have it on my iPod! So I went to iTunes from my iPod and bought *Failure On!* \$9.99! My wife saw that I had bought something and she was like 'Honey? What did you buy on iTunes?' And I was so embarrassed to tell my wife that I had bought my own album. I mean I have, like, 3 copies at home!

Matt: What would you like to tell the Advent fans?

Johnny: Thank you so much. Don't be bummed that we're done. God is still moving and (is) real and doing great things. If you were encouraged in some way don't let it die out. You were created for a reason. Just because we're over it doesn't mean anything. You guys have been wonderful. God bless all of you.

Nick: OK, this is my last question. Will there ever be a Beloved reunion of any kind? Even just like one song?

Johnny: Never. I would love it, but we're all in different places. There was a band who I used to love seeing and they just did a reunion show. Back in the day

when they would play the room would just fill with the Spirit. So when I saw the reunion I was looking forward to that feeling of the Spirit, but when I saw them it wasn't there. Like I don't even know if those guys believe anymore and I don't want that to happen to Beloved because Beloved meant so much. I love everyone that was in Beloved so there's no bad blood and I love everyone that's in Advent. This season of our life is over. I know that if we did do a reunion show we would bring in a huge crowd and we would make a lot of money, but we'd be doing it for the wrong reasons. So, to answer your question: "No, there will never be a Beloved reunion," and I can safely say that there will never be an Advent reunion.

We wrapped up the interview and said a prayer for the band and waved goodbye to one of the greatest legends in hardcore. Advent R.I.P.

✕

SHHH. YOU BETTER KEEP THIS MELODIC POWER METAL BAND A SECRET, BECAUSE WHEN THE REST OF THE INDIE ROCK ARTISTS FROM ATHENS, GA, FIND OUT THAT **THEOCRACY IS FORGING MANLY METALLIC RIFFAGE ON THEIR TURF, IT MIGHT START A WAR ... OR CAUSE R.E.M. TO BREAK UP ALL OVER AGAIN.**

26 FEATURE

BY DOUG VAN PELT

Tell us about the recording of *As The World Bleeds*. What was different this time around? What were the overall, general goals in writing and recording these tunes?

Matt Smith: Well, the main difference was the addition of two new members, bassist Jared Oldham and lead guitarist Val Allen Wood. I think the full-band energy and vibe is apparent on this record, and has brought a new dimension to the sound – it's most noticeable in the guitar solos. As for the songs themselves, my goal was to write a Theocracy "greatest hits" album of sorts. After *Mirror of Souls*, which revolved around the 23-minute title track, I wanted to write an album where there wasn't really a centerpiece song, but where every single song could realistically be someone's favorite. Hopefully we pulled that off.

The artwork implies destruction and judgment. What are your thoughts on these things, the end times, the culture in which we live?

I think the initial spark of inspiration behind the title track came from hearing someone say, "If God exists, then why are things so messed up?" My reaction was, "Well, I mean, we've done all this to ourselves," and that's basically what the song is about. There's no big mystery in the state of things; there are plenty of instances throughout Scripture warning: "If you do things your own way, this is what will happen." So, don't blame God – humanity collectively said, "We don't need You, we don't want You telling us how to live. We can do this ourselves." And here we are.

Speaking of artwork, I understand you will release a special double-gatefold vinyl edition... How important is the visual side of your art? Why? I'm also curious if you guys take some visual props or backdrops on stage with you when playing live. If so, what do they look like?

It's very important, I think. I believe bands should put work, thought and effort into the whole package. Nowadays people might not care about artwork and packaging as much – which is sad, I think – but it just comes off as lazy or cheap when an artist just says, "I'm fine with whatever." Of course, I grew up obsessing over the whole package, reading all the lyrics and liner notes, and devouring every bit of info I could, so I still have that fan's perspective.

Tell me about the various lyrical themes on *As the World Bleeds*...

"I AM" – In the Old Testament, one of the names for God is I AM, and I started thinking

about that and how a cool song could consist of nothing but "I AM..." and various attributes of God in every line. It covers a lot of different ground, starting with the fatherly aspects of God and moving into the power and wonder. Then the final section ties it all together by referencing the sacrifice of Jesus.

"The Master Storyteller" – I got this title and idea from a friend. It's about looking at life through spiritual eyes, and how we can constantly find nuggets of truth in songs or movies or art – even if that wasn't necessarily the intent of the author. I notice that common thread all the time.

"Nailed" – Tells the story of Martin Luther and his discovery of the concept of grace, and his subsequent rebellion against the church of his day.

"Hide In the Fairytale" – This song debunks the myth that people are born innocent. I think anyone who has ever been around kids "sharing" toys knows that's far from the case, but I still hear people spouting that nonsense nonetheless.

"The Gift of Music" – People often point to sunsets or mountains or similar breathtaking natural wonders as the pinnacle of creation's beauty, but I think it's music. I think it's the greatest proof of God's existence, and our greatest gift. I can say more through a single melody than I could with a mountain of pens and paper.

"30 Pieces of Silver" – Everyone knows the story of Judas' betrayal, but I think we're often guilty of the same thing. Maybe not with money, but we can sell out for most anything.

"Drown" – Uses the story of Peter walking on the water and sinking as its framework, but it's really talking about trying to keep the faith in any seemingly hopeless situation. Trying to look beyond our own circumstances when we feel ourselves going under.

"Altar To the Unknown God" – Basically the story of Paul's visit to Athens in Acts 17:16-34 set to music.

"Light of the World" – We usually think about Jesus saying "I am the light of the world" about Himself, but he also said "YOU are the light of the world." I think we're falling way short of that designation.

When crafting a new song, how important is the "melody vs. power" or "beauty vs. toughness" conflict? If you do think about or wrestle with such things, which

side wins this debate? Why?

I've actually never thought about it as any sort of conflict or debate; it just seems to work out naturally. The melody is the most important part of any song, and the arrangement and presentation have to support that. That's the great thing about metal: it allows you to present your ideas with so much more power than any other form of music, and especially with the kind of subject matter we deal with, it just works. It's like being a painter and having the whole spectrum of colors to work with, instead of only a select few. The important thing is having a big-picture perspective of how the music and the lyrics need to marry, so things are intense when they need to be intense and quiet when they need to be quiet.

How much is too progressive? When do you know if a song has "too much noodling" or self-indulgent jamming?

I'm very sensitive to that kind of thing, and have gotten more so over time. There's no cut-and-dried answer; I think it's just a "feel" thing. For me, it's when a section doesn't flow or add anything to the composition as a whole. If it's moving and it's musical and it takes the piece somewhere new, I enjoy a bit of instrumental flourish. But there are some songs you hear where the song just stops cold, goes into a five-minute instrumental showoff section, and then stops again and restarts exactly where it was five minutes ago. Completely pointless. I'm always second-guessing myself with that kind of thing. "Is this too much? Is it disjointed? Is it too long?" The song "I AM" from our new album has a few wacky proggy moments, and those are meant to represent the complex, "beyond the realm of human understanding" aspects of God in the second movement of the song. It was easier to get that kind of idea across musically than lyrically.

What do you think of the term "power metal"? Do you think it befits Theocracy? Why or why not?

I just think of it as a category to give people a general idea of what we may sound like, so I'm fine with it. I usually just call us "melodic metal" if someone asks me, but "power metal" is fitting as well, I guess. Sometimes we get "progressive metal" and I feel we have elements of that here and there, but not nearly enough to warrant that tag. Anyway, it's really just a way for people who haven't heard us to know we sound more like, say, Edguy than Nile or whatever, and I understand that it's necessary with the ridiculous number of bands out there now.

Tell me about your current headlining tour in Europe. How is it going? What have been some of your favorite memories so far? How are the audiences responding?

We actually just got back, and it was pretty eye-opening. We were over there for a tour in 2009 and it was fun, but this one immediately felt like we had somehow gotten a lot bigger since then. We arrived and our first show was sold out, and all of the crowds were bigger and were there to see us, which wasn't always the case on the last tour.

It was exciting and encouraging. We love playing for our friends in Europe. The fans and promoters couldn't have been more friendly, helpful and supportive. It was awesome and we appreciated it so much.

What kind of reaction does your band get in your hometown of Athens, GA, which is known for indie rock bands like R.E.M., etc?

No one in Athens could possibly care any less that we exist (laughter)! That made the Europe experience even more surprising and rewarding.

Where would you like to see Theocracy in the next five years? What are some of your goals as a band?

A couple more albums, continued growth, and being able to work with the band full-time would be awesome. One of my personal goals has always been to not have a single "throwaway" track in the Theocracy catalog. I hope we can always maintain a certain level of quality. My mantra is, if it doesn't give me goosebumps, it's not good enough to release.

What do you think about the popular hybrids of "screamo" and modern melodic rock?

I don't really pay much attention to most of that stuff, but a lot of what I hear sounds samey and interchangeable to me – especially the screamy stuff. But there are some modern bands I hear that perk my ears up from time to time. A great song is a great song, regardless of genre. In general, I just feel like there's too much of everything out there now. The internet has done a lot of good things, and has definitely been good for us, but it's also brought oversaturation and overkill when it comes to music. I feel like we need maybe 0.5 percent of the number of bands that are out there now. But maybe I'm just an old fart (more laughter).

Who are some of your biggest influences as a band?

It's a vast scope, from member to member; from punk to film-score composers to extreme metal. For me, the early influences were pretty typical: Queensryche, Maiden, Metallica, Dream Theater, etc. I'm a fan of songwriters, especially those who can write big melodies: Tobias Sammet, Tony Kakko, Neal Morse and Tuomas Holopainen are a few of my favorites.

What are the individual characteristics and/or personality of each band member like? What do each of the band members do when they're not playing music with Theocracy?

Those guys are a blast. I love them. I hope I always get to play music with these guys, because as far as I'm concerned, it's the ultimate Theocracy lineup. Shawn is the craziest – he's literally a nonstop laugh and a guaranteed good time. Jon is an accountant by day and the most dependable of us – he's a rock. Val is a musician's musician; always practicing or obsessing over theory or technique. Jared was a good friend of mine before joining the band, so we have similar interests in sports, movies, etc. And I'm a studio nerd, so I'm usually mixing or recording for other bands when I'm not writing songs.

Anything else you'd like to add?

Just a big thanks to the fans for reading this, supporting us, and checking out *As the World Bleeds*. A lot of work went into it, and we're all really proud of it and hope you enjoy it. Also to you, Doug: thanks for the interesting and researched questions; I really enjoyed the interview. God bless!



It's been a few years since Sixpence None The Richer last released new music. However, lead singer **Leigh Nash** is sure to please the contemporary Christian music community with *Hymns & Sacred Songs*, as it's filled with hymns, both old and new. Nash, ever the creative artist, takes a lot of liberties with the arrangements for some of these oftentimes very familiar songs.

"I didn't grow up with those hymns," Nash responds, when asked about her unique approach to recording a hymns project. "I was raised Southern Baptist and they (the church hymns) were different from any of these. I hadn't heard many of them before so it made it easier to make 'em my own or add new melodies to 'em. It was like just starting with really beautiful words. I didn't have kind of the ghosts of old melodies in my head." Perhaps, the next time Nash records a hymns project like this one – assuming, of course, there is even a next time – she'll choose songs drawn from her Southern Baptist upbringing. "I would absolutely love to!" she affirms. "Those are my favorite memories of church. I'm really into the beauty of the words and the way they were written back then. And certainly, the melodies as well." Chances are good that Nash would not reconfigure these church songs from her upbringing the way she's rethought this latest collection of largely unfamiliar compositions. "I think that would be uncomfortable for me, though, rewriting melodies that I'm so married to and in love with from my childhood. That would be uncomfortable."

She's redone old songs, such as "Come Thou Fount Of Every Blessing." There are also newer songs, too. One of the best of these fresher hymns is Nash's version of "Power of the Cross," by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend. "That's one of my favorites as well," Nash says. "It gets me choked up every time. Well, all of 'em do. I'm such a sap."

Leigh Nash simply does a wonderful job with the hymns on this new collection. Even so, Nash is best known for her role in fronting the pop-rock band Sixpence None The Richer. The good news for Sixpence fans is that this radio favorite is alive and well. Nevertheless, it's been tough for the band to get its new music into the hands of its fans.

"We have been trying to get this record out for a couple of years," Nash explains, with obvious frustration in her voice. The group made the album for EMI, although the music will likely not be released on that label. "It's got a new title," she continues, "it's called *Lost In Translation*. We're looking to release that in March." Better still, *Lost In Translation* may not be

the only Sixpence None The Richer release in 2012. "Because it's taken so long to get this record out, our goal is to put a couple of things out next year, so there's not such a long pause between releases."

Lost In Translation is a relatively famous Bill Murray movie. Yet for Sixpence None The Richer, this album title sums up a lot of what the group has been going through lately, both professionally and personally.

"That just resonates with how we've been feeling, and how the process of just life and growing up and trying to navigate our way in the band, but also just as people," she says. "That just seems to describe where we stand the last few years. The original title was *Strange Conversation*, and that's pretty apt as well. But we were just tired of that title, and this feels really good."

The band is also really happy with the job their producer did. "We got to work with a producer named Jim Scott, and he just knocked it out of the park," Nash raves. "He is just a fantastic producer – and human, period – and just a great guy to be around. And we got to take our band out to California and make this record and just had a beautiful time doing it. It will always be one of the records that is closest to our hearts."

Sixpence None The Richer has always been one of the most pristine, pure pop bands. With that said, *Lost In Translation* may reveal a different side of the band. The way Nash describes it, it might be a little rawer than what we've come to expect from the group.

"It's not real lush," she explains. "Where *Divine Discontent* had a lot of strings and extra bells and whistles on it, and this one was intentionally kept a little more bare to put the focus on the songs and my voice, and I think we did a really good job of it. It's a really cool record."

Surprisingly, when asked what it is about Sixpence None The Richer's legacy that makes her most proud, Nash does not mention their original singles, such as "Kiss Me" and "Breathe Your Name," or their covers of "Don't Dream It's Over" or "There She Goes." Nash responds, "One of the most beautiful worship songs that I've ever heard is something that I got to sing, that being 'Melody of You.'"

With some solo music under her belt now, Nash must divide her time between fronting a band and putting out her own work.

"I enjoy both," she states. "Sixpence will always be one of the things that's closest to my heart, for sure. But when things come along like this hymns record it was really perfect because I was inspired by the thought of doing it. I thought, 'Man, this is something I can really sink my teeth into and be proud of and be happy about what I'm doing, and not to have to be out on the road to support it.' There weren't a ton of expectations as far as that (tour support) went. I just loved using my voice and being able to work. I feel like one of the big reasons I'm here on the planet is to sing, so I'm delighted to do it pretty much anytime under most circumstances. This was a real pleasure."

It's ironic that a great singer like Nash wasn't recognized for her voice when she was in school. She sang in choirs, yes, but was by no means assertive about her talents. She was never one of the ones that sang solos, for instance.

As she recalls, the singers that got the attention were the ones that were a little more "showboaty," as she puts it. "I was a little too quiet and shy. I didn't think, 'Man, I could really rip that up!' I always thought they (the showboaty ones) sounded great, and they did. Once I got older and started singing with Sixpence and we put out that record, I probably started thinking that I might be able to sing a solo. It really scared me (back then). I was really nervous to perform on stage."

Even though she was terribly shy at the time, she must have still realized she had innate singing talent. "I told somebody the other day," Nash admits, "that – singing hymns in church growing up – I think I do remember thinking I wished that some of those old ladies would be quiet so I could hear myself." Word to the wise: Be quiet and hear what Leigh Nash has to sing.

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I don't know what it is about the Carolina states that breed some of the best music. They have Stretch Arm Strong, Beloved, Advent, My Epic, and **John Mark McMillan**.

You may or may not know who John Mark is. But if you go to a church that plays contemporary worship, you have sung his biggest single “How He Loves Us.” You may know the song because of different Christian artists like David Crowder, Jesus Culture, or Flyleaf. Though nothing compares to the original.

I remember I heard *The Song Inside the Sounds of Breaking Down* in 2006. I just remember it was in my friend Allison’s Scion. “How He Loves Us” came on and I thought it was one of the most amazing worship songs I had ever heard. Five years later it has become one of the biggest worship songs of all time, next to “How Great is our God.”

In 2008 I shared a napster account with my roommate. I was trying to find *The Song Inside the Sounds of Breaking Down* and *The Medicine* to introduce my roommate Kevin to The John Mark. All I found was his first record *Hope Anthology, Volume 1*. I was amazed at how great it was for a first record. Then I finally heard *The Medicine*, and was blown away on how much better it was from the record before it. I am going to say it. “How He Loves Us” is not John Mark McMillan’s best song. John Mark has a gift of writing records that are better than the last. Don’t get me wrong, I love everything he has put out. He just knows that you can’t write one hit. Then try to rewrite history.

I saw online Tom Morello from Rage Against The Machine was at Occupy Wall Street playing songs from his watchman project. He said he wanted to add a soundtrack to the “revolution.” If you were to go play at an Occupy event what songs from *Economy* and older records would be on the soundtrack to the “revolution?”

I have to say I’m at the stage of my life where I’ve realized that time is very important. And though demonstrations are probably beneficial for certain causes, I feel more of a need to give my life to something I’m for and not to something I’m against. Even if a certain thing may need to be torn down, I’d rather give my life to build something else. It’s very easy to be against something, because it requires little more than your opinion. But to truly build something is a whole different story. When I die I hope people remember me for the things I loved and not the things I hated. The word “Revolution” means “a turning.” If you just keep turning, then you naturally end up facing the direction you started. So, I’m not sure that I would picture

my music as a soundtrack to a “turning around” as I could see it to be a soundtrack to a “moving forward.” I could certainly consider “Seen a Darkness” or Sheet of Night” as a song for that soundtrack.

I have seen over the past few years your records have come out on vinyl. Why do you put out vinyl, and is it important to you to put out vinyl as a worship artist?

I like vinyl for 3 reasons:

1. I love the sound quality. It’s different, especially if you like old music ... and I love old music.
2. I love artwork. I love the way art frames the music and we have lost this slowly over the years by moving from a 12” LP cover to a 6” CD cover and then now to a blip on a computer screen. The vinyl gives a visual artist an opportunity again to frame the music and bring context to what the listener is hearing.
3. I love the active aspect of listening to vinyl. You have to pick it up, put it on the player, turn it over, etc. It requires your attention. Music has become such a passive form of background art and I like how vinyl almost requires the listener to ... actually listen to the music again.

You have some very great ways to promote yourself. For *The Medicine* you had videos of different versions of some songs. Now for *Economy* you have made videos of acoustic versions of some songs. Will these be on a deluxe iTunes edition sometime in the future? How did the idea of the videos come about?

We actually filmed acoustic videos for all 10 songs on the new album. The idea was to find a way to leak the album before it came out. So, looking at this album to have a subtle American theme, I decided to film the songs in different parts of the country from New York City to the Arizona Desert to an ancient graveyard in Charleston. We will be releasing all 10 of them on iTunes as part of the iTunes LP experience that also includes demo tapes, notes, some chord charts and other special surprises.

From what I have seen you put out a new record every four years. Is that why *The Medicine* was a re-release when you signed to Integrity? Or were you just not writing a new record at the time?

I’m a slow writer, but also record companies don’t turn on a dime, either. When I signed to Integrity I thought we would put *The Medicine* out right away, but it took about 6 months or more to re-release it, then we toured it for a

while. Then while we were in the process of recording the new album (we started over a year ago) the record company went into a long difficult transition. By the time they landed it was a great deal of work to even keep the November 1 slot. The new company has been extremely supportive of the date, but it took some time to get things up and rolling again.

You signed to Integrity already having big success with three records under your belt. What have been the benefits going from a indie artist to having major label support?

It has been good to work with a team.

When I heard you were touring with David Crowder I had a feeling he would be doing “How He Loves Us” and you would join him. Whose idea was it? How long has that been planned?

It was David’s idea. He brought the idea to me just before doors opened at the first show in Austin and I guess it just became part of the night after that.

While I am on the topic of touring, why do you not play the major Texas cities as much as fans would like? Will you tour cities that you don’t tour that often more now after doing this tour?

We toured them two years ago and have done a few spot dates since, but we’ve been in the studio, then we have had to cancel our last Texas run due to the birth of a couple babies. By the time we could have made it back around we were too close to the *7 Tour* and had to wait. So it hasn’t been intentional.

I know you are a big fan of bands like Band of Horses, My Morning Jacket, Counting Crows, and most of all Bruce Springsteen. What was your playlist while writing *Economy* and in the studio?

Lots of stuff like Willie Nelson, Springsteen, Dr. Dog, Washed Out, The National etc...

“How He Loves Us” has been a worship favorite for many years now. What songs off *Economy* would you like to see worship leaders play in church?

I hope worship leaders catch on to “Murdered Son.” I’m really proud of that song. It says something that I want people to hear. I also think churches could all sing “Sins are Stones” and even maybe “Love You Swore” if they are brave.

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“Originally, we wanted to celebrate our tenth anniversary,” explains **As I Lay Dying** frontman Tim Lambesis, who sounds way more surprised than any of us that his band has lasted this long and risen to such heights of heavy metal respect. This is a genre that one can’t really pretend or play games with tricks and mirrors. Sooner or later your band has to deliver the goods or get pushed aside. Instead AILD has done their own pushing. And now they get to release *Decas...*

“At the time we only had one song and we had the idea of doing a couple of covers and, ‘Maybe we’ll put together an EP.’ But, just being the perfectionists that we are, the more ideas that started floating around and the next thing you knew we had 12 tracks. ‘We never do anything half-hearted, so we might as well put together a full release.’ It was originally supposed to be just a casual way to celebrate our 10th anniversary and it became a full-blown release that we’re proud of.”

“I think the three originals are a good way of covering the whole spectrum of what we do – from the heavy side to the very melodic side. The remixes – there’s a song from each album, so I think it’s a very encompassing release.”

The word “remix” often conjures up a wide array of re-configuring a song (see Korn and Skrillex, for example) and AILD wasn’t afraid to bend their own rules. “The first one (“Beneath the Encasing of Ashes”) is actually a medley from all our favorite parts from the first album, selected by Jordan (Mancino) and I. At the time we had such a small budget when recording that album, we didn’t buy the (master) tapes, so when it came time to do a remix we didn’t really have that option, because there was no individual tracks. Our Plan B was to re-record one of the songs on there, but we listened through and the band has changed so much over the years that we decided to pick our favorite parts from the whole album and put ‘em all in one song. That song sounds a lot like As I Lay Dying. It’s just a total re-recording, but then the other songs are more on the digital side.”

They hired Ben Weinman from Dillinger Escape Plan to remix “Wrath Upon Ourselves” (from the *An Ocean Between Us* album) and InnerPartySystem (for *The Powerless Rise’s* “The Blinding of False Light”). “The reason we hired them is because we thought they were one of the best modern remix-type guys.” AILD is right. When it comes to dubstep, IPS has got it going on.

As far as recording “normal” tunes, in general the band will email each other song ideas and original riffs.

“We’ll probably email each other about 20 songs by the time it comes to entering the studio.” And by studio, Lambesis has one of his own that he built a while ago (right around *An Ocean Between Us*), in part because he wanted to make sure they never had to rush or not devote sufficient time to the vocals for an album in the haste of trying to bend around a contracted studio’s schedule. His resume since building that thing has proven that it was a super-wise choice.

“We’ll get together for about two weeks rehearsing the songs, turning them from digital email creations into full band songs. Once that’s done we’ll go into the studio and do drums first, guitar second, bass third and then vocals last.”

DECAS = 10 YEARS | A LOOK BACK

“My first As I Lay Dying moment was actually when I was packing all my stuff up and getting ready to move back to San Diego – move back to my parent’s house, which, ironically, is where I still live in 2011. In the process of packing up all my stuff, mentally I started packing up, ‘What would I do for songs for a new band’ and I had a concept in my head. I spent twenty-something hours driving home, moved back into my parents’ house and as soon as I unpacked my stuff I also started unpacking and recording my ideas to show the potential members of what would become As I Lay Dying.”

“Jordan and I met, earlier playing in other local San Diego bands that had broken up. He was the best drummer around at the time, so I gave him a call and showed him some of the ideas and he said he was interested to play. Our other guitar player was a friend of mine from high school. That was just a natural, easy connection. That was how the band started.”

“We were so excited to just start playing music that we wrote the whole first album in about two months and two months after the inception of As I Lay Dying we were in the studio recording *Beneath the Encasing of Ashes* (Pluto Records). It was originally self-funded and Pluto Records reimbursed us for the album via trade (for the CDs) and promotion and distribution, so we were able to make our money back through all that stuff. It

was one of those things that we put the album together so quickly that a few months later we had already changed our sound. We had some more melodic ideas from a guitar perspective, so that kind of led us to our first tour outside of the West Coast and that was up to Cornerstone in 2001. It was actually on that tour that I started writing music a little bit more in the melodic end of the spectrum. “Forever” was written on that tour. We got home from that very first tour and said, ‘We can’t record our new stuff already, so we might as well keep touring.’ That was probably the most difficult time of our career – between 2001 and 2003. We just tried to stay as active as possible. We could never really find tour directors or committed guitar players, so we just went for it. We had fill-ins when necessary and guys coming and leaving and subs. It was almost comedic how different each tour was – as far as visually what we looked like on stage. Between Jordan and I we were the two guys that were committed to the band through and through.

“Right about when we were just so frustrated with member changes and we were going to give up is when we decided, ‘We have five songs. Let’s just record an EP for Pluto Records and if things start to pick up a little bit, we’ll keep finding ways to keep the band rolling. So, we recorded the EP for Pluto Records. That was actually the same material that got us on to Metal Blade, so naturally, it gave us a breath of fresh air. It still didn’t really solve our member-change problems... (For more info on the revolving door history of early AILD, get ahold of the *This Is Who We Are* DVD).

“It was after our Metal Blade debut, *Frail Words Collapse*, that we finally found two guitar players that were very committed Nick (Hipa) and Phil (Sgross), who have been with us ever since 2004). For solidifying our current lineup as it is, *Shadows of Security* was the first big step where I wasn’t the one being the primary contributor from the guitar perspective. It also diversified our sound. We started having slightly more guitar solos on each album.”

“*An Ocean Between Us* is when Josh (Gilbert) first joined the band. He was the first bass player to actually record his own parts on the album, which was a huge

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step for us. Not only did he record his own parts, but shortly after *An Ocean Between Us* he started contributing lots of song ideas. That explains a little bit of the diversity and progress between *An Ocean Between Us* and *The Powerless Rise*. By the time *The Powerless Rise* came around, it was the first time in our band's history that all five members of the band were all contributing to the songwriting process.

"I think that's it. That's the brief story of the progress from one album to the next. Some of the highlights along the way I think would be our first-ever overseas tour. That was right around the time we were getting ready to record *Shadows are Security*. We decided to go to Europe for the first time. We only did two headlining

shows and it was actually an amazing experience, because we were definitely – even in the label's eyes – a small band in Europe at that time. and somehow the promotions of the show really connected and they both ended up selling out. It was almost an instant second home. Germany became almost overnight this growing new market for the band. We realized that, not only did we have a strong budding career in the U.S., but if we were able to come over to Europe more often, it would be to our advantage to tour over there. Germany, in particular, being the home of Metal Blade's European office, it was the first place that really started growing for us overseas. Using the model of our first European tour, we applied that to multiple countries around the world. At this point we've been to every country that

I could think of that would be typical supporters of metal music. There's certain areas, like the continent of Africa as a whole doesn't really have many venues that cater to metal bands very often. We've never been to Africa and to certain parts of Europe, but in general we've become an international band over time, which is something I'd never ever thought was possible. I'd never thought that we'd make a living playing music, because I thought this style of music that we play was so underground. I never thought that it would give us a chance to see places that I would pay to go, but now we're actually getting paid to go to these places, which is amazing."



LOSING YOUR GUITARIST CAN KILL A BAND – ESPECIALLY WHEN IT'S A BAND THAT IS AS ECLECTIC, TECHNICALLY INTERDEPENDENT AND SKILLED AT THEIR INDIVIDUAL PARTS AS THIS BAND IS. BUT WHEN FOUNDING GUITARIST GREG HILL DEPARTED **MUTEMATH,**

BY DOUG VAN PELT

it didn't destroy what was left. Turns out the bass player, Roy Mitchell-Cardenas, stepped up to the plate and wrote guitar parts. Who knew? I mean, I never saw the dude pick up a six-string in one of their switch-instruments-and-jam moments during their mass de-constructions each show in the song "Break the Same."

The band did convene and apparently ask some of those "What do we do now?" questions. "As we began to work on songs," says masterful drummer Darren King, "we quickly realized that having fewer people in the creative process was better. Roy's a great guitar player, and we all started feeding off of this new inspiration for the kind of record we could make ... all we needed was to be left alone until we got there."

Get there they did, as the band was able to not only soldier on with the signature MUTEMATH sound, but with *Odd Soul* they've done more with less. The album brings super-sticky melodies around and on top of odd time signatures and progressive riffs in a manner that has the ability to impress hard-to-please musicians. It's hard to make a style of music like jazz popular, but MUTEMATH could very well be the future poster boy for the improvisational and rely-on-feel genre.

Turns out the band pretty much wrote and recorded all of the tunes at frontman Paul Meany's house in New Orleans. This was a perfect scenario for the band to self-produce their next album. If you've been paying attention (and been to one of their always-monumental live shows), you'd probably agree that these skillful and uber-creative musicians have earned the right to call the shots and oversee the entire creative process themselves. The timing was perfect, too. The band had just put a time-stamp on their live show with the *Armistice Live* CD/DVD, once again capturing their captivating and can't-take-your-eyes-off live show, adding material from their second-full length and making it a must-own for fans that already even owned the essential live DVD, *Flesh and Bones Electric Fun*. A live album can serve as a descriptive memorial to a time and a sound. Now it was time to stretch out and grow some more. The process began as soon as they put the finishing touches on *Armistice Live*.

"We really wanted to just cut to the chase on this album and compose music that would work for us on stage," explains singer/pianist/theremin player Paul Meany. "We were craving more high-spirited music for this album,



so any song idea that came close to depressing got nixed," he continues. "We're not good at being dark so we wanted to see how far we could go into creating something glaringly bright."

That being said, it's not like *Odd Soul* is 13 versions of "Shiny Happy People." There are long, brooding build-ups in tunes like "Sunray" and the album closer "In No Time." The band is anything but static and it translates into their musical menu. The album almost takes the listener on a journey (but without going all prog on us and making us wish we could exit this train) and it's one of those albums that stands up under repeated listens. Like the time-honored cliché that suffering breeds great art, apparently the struggle and challenge of losing a band member stretched the band to the point of, dare I say it (?), greatness.

"I've certainly never pushed my voice as hard as I did on this record," Meany shares. "We all pushed ourselves to the brink of our ability on this record ... we recorded it as if this would be the last record we'd ever make." That might explain why it turned out so good – all 13 tracks are listenable and mighty enjoyable.

Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of this album is revealed in the layers of lyrics that find the band allowing themselves to dig into their own lives, their own past and their own upbringing. Their decidedly Christian upbringing.

The ever-quotable Bono has gone on record to reveal that, for

him (and, undoubtedly, many of us), the only music that really interests him these days are artists that are either running towards God or running away from him. The subject matter of the Creator certainly has its share of compelling songs. *Odd Soul* is no exception.

Meany describes his upbringing as "what I guess you could call eccentric Christianity." This is the first album that Meany and King fully collaborated on lyrics. "We wanted to address a lot of the stories we've gathered over the years in what is an admittedly odd culture," he continues. "And not only that, it's our culture, and we know it well... I think writing this record certainly gave us a new appreciation for it, and it gave us a chance to be much more up-front about ourselves."

What's amazing is that the band tapped into this idea on their own, as opposed to the helping hand of a producer. Producers are known to get a band turning in on themselves to extract something personal and therefore timeless from an artist. Kudos to MUTEMATH for choosing to do that all on their own.

"I learned through these years to treasure my hyper-literal, overly ambitious, loose-wire adolescent adventures in attempting to out-Jesus even Jesus," King adds. "We wanted to celebrate, up front and center, what we used to think was best kept in the shadows, our weird religious roots. The challenge we took on with this record was to become more lyrically honest,

vulnerable, and specific than before, with music that was as exhilarating as some of the most charged-up shows we had done up to that point. I am proud to have been raised in an environment that valued intensity, that felt it was important to have something to get all worked up over, that allowed music to be spontaneous and loud and innocent (aka youthful). So this record is the start of us telling the stories that surrounded all of that."

In a recent issue of *Alternative Press* (November issue #280) King revealed that his spastic and explosive drum playing is probably directly related to his childhood: "I think I play the drums the way I do because I never experienced anything sexually other than nocturnal emissions until I was about 23. When I look back on that, I think that affected my drumming (laughs)."

In an older issue of *AP*, Meany dismissed the topic of faith after revealing that he considered himself a "Universalist," which he explained most Christians would not accept as a valid doctrine.

Like a good artist is rewarded for doing, they've chosen their words wisely. MUTEMATH has painstakingly positioned themselves as *not* a Christian band – to the point of suing its record label (Teleprompt) for its broken promise to not sell or promote their albums in the insular Christian bookstore market prior to releasing it to the general public. They've gone on record to diffuse the notion and even spoken to this magazine off the record to explain why they "respectfully declined" to offer an interview for the *Armistice* album, a centerfold poster opportunity and the cover story interview for this issue.

This writer and magazine publisher was told by Steve Karas (a long-time publicist that's serviced HM Magazine with interviews for artists like Extreme and Scott Stapp) "the band likes HM Magazine and likes you, Doug, but if we grant you an interview then we'll have to grant them to *Relevant* and other Christian magazines, too." On this side of the journalistic fence one is wise not to accept everything at face value, but this explanation makes sense. One comment I recall from that publicist/editor conversation was something like: "Fans of Christian music can be almost militant when it comes to bands they think they own."

MUTEMATH apparently doesn't want to be owned. They've worked hard to get where they are – which is the enviable position of being able to think of live late-night television performances appearances as "been-there-done-that" numerous times. When an artist has power and prestige, they can snub certain media outlets. In the words of Jack White, "Oh well."

Odd Soul – starting with the artwork on the cover of a small cross on the lapel of the kind of nerdy jacket that Dana Carvey's Church Lady character would dress her 10-year-

old son in, and weaving through the lyrics of most songs – makes commentary on the Christian faith without indicting neither the evangelical subculture that's sprung up in America in the past 40-50 years or the faith it's centered on (at least not in an entirely damning way). Interpretation is primarily left to the listener.

Songs like "Blood Pressure" put a temporary magnifying glass on a community that squeezes its parishioners to perform: "Why can't you be more like your older brother? Why can't you do a little more for Jesus?"

The title track offers identity to a follower of Jesus that is living in a world that doesn't always jibe with its standards and frame of reference.

"Allies" is one of the few middle-of-the-album songs that turns this tension into a slightly adversarial position, quite accurately describing how many of the faithful spend so much time defining themselves by what they're against (as opposed to what they're for).

"Walking Paranoia" references the return of Christ, but in a fear-inspiring way that's "gonna give me a heart attack." See a trend here? Tension, stress, nerves and pressure keep showing up here. It kinda makes you feel sorry for the folks that've had to endure this kind of confusing and slightly twisted upbringing.

"One More" adroitly expresses the kind of addictive personality that fuels a lot of our faithless moments. I can certainly relate to the notion of begging God for "just one more feeling, one more high, one more healing, one more sign."

"Quarantine" is another well-titled tune that dives into this world, which repeats the refrain, "Let it heal someone," but even more cleverly, it repeats the album's overall theme of "this faith is making me physically nervous" when it states: "There your heart rate goes again." A curious conclusion, though, is the line that reinforces with repetition: "We are fish out of water, believe it."

And is the chorus of "In No Time" referring to eternity? Whether it was created with that in mind by its writer or not, it could be a beautiful play on words to describe a paradise without watches. It brings a sense of peace and resolution to the turmoil described in the middle parts of *Odd Soul*, seemingly having processed and accepted the imperfection and tension. Perhaps the artist is telling us that, whether the Christian faith is ultimately true or not, we will definitely find out (in no time at all).

MUTEMATH's survival and subsequent creativity is something that's good for us all – those inside and outside of the fold. It may or may not have a happy ending, but it's darn compelling art. One can imagine that this might be exactly how the band would want it.



~~Dear Santa~~ ~~Dear St. Nicholas~~
Dear Mom and Dad

I'm really ~~onesin'~~ for. This is what
I really want for Christmas!

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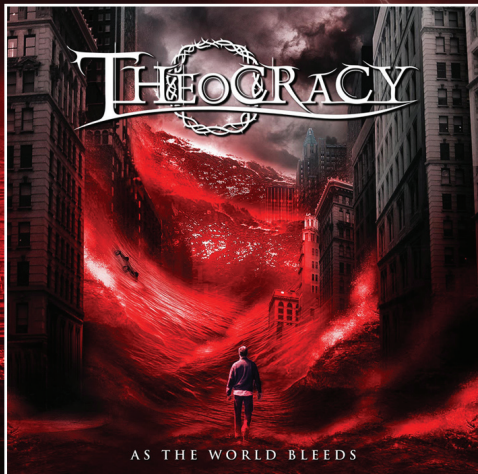
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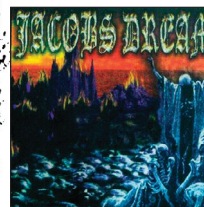
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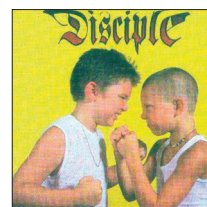
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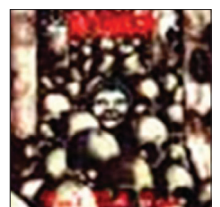
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IT IS AN INTERESTING THING TO WATCH A PERSON DEVELOP INTO S
AT A TIME, I MAY HAVE STOOD AS A CHILD BENEATH MY FATHER, ASS
ING KNOWLEDGE FROM THE DEPTH OF A VOICE THAT HAD SOMEHO
THAT WAS NEVER DEVELOPED BY GROWING IN WISDOM AND STATU
(WITH RESPECT), ABLE TO LOOK INTO THE EYES OF OLDER MEN AND
EXPERIENCING IN THE PRESENT. PERHAPS I AM EVEN ABLE TO SEE P
WITH MY CIRCUMSTANCE, TO A PLACE WHERE I CAN FEEL IN MY HE

Such will be, generations down the line, the experience of young men that hold conversations with the grandparent versions of In The Midst Of Lions. (What? You thought that all of the tough-guy, silhouetted hardcore press pics would be cool when you're back to wearing diapers again? They're practically grandparents already in this fast-paced, attention-deficit industry...) There is a propensity within the eyes of a fan to view your favorite artist as a larger-than-life god or goddess because they happen to wear black, carry pieces of wood and metal that make noises in their hands and stand on plywood named "stage" while they

wiggle and flail around for a half-hour... But when Matt Janssen, Jake Mitchell, Sam Penner, Alex Livingston and Ryan McAllister speak wisdom into the ears of their sons, they will be five persons who lived life and, by the grace of God, ran the race faithfully, inviting others along for the ride.

"My goal with the lyrics," says vocalist Matt Janssen, "has always been to open people's eyes to the fact that no matter how screwed up you think your life is, our Lord is always willing to forgive if you are willing to open the door and receive His grace. And I try to do

IN THE MIDS



SOMETHING OTHER THAN WHAT HE WAS. PERHAPS, ASSUMING THAT HE HAD ALWAYS BEEN HIS AGE, SPEAKING NOW SKIPPED PUBERTY, AND WALKING IN A MATURITY MORE BENEATH MEN AND GOD. AND YET, AS I AGE, I AM HARD TO SEE THAT THEY HAVE KNOWN THE PAST THAT I AM EASY TO SEE KNOWING IN MY HEAD THAT THEY SYMPATHIZE WITH THE PAST THAT THEY DO.

BY LEVI MACALLISTER

that by exposing my past and the rest of the band's pasts."

And the band has a past, boy, as do its members. Picture a hobbit-looking creature from Albuquerque, NM, a stalky goblin of an adolescent from Nowhere, Missouri, the freckled male version of Little Red Riding Hood, a lanky, flesh-and-bone version of Gumby and a dorky, *Lord Of The Rings* / fantasy fiction / comic book enthusiast all meeting together in mom's house to practice shreds and inhales. Of course, we are made up of more than humor. Guitarist Sam Penner has been so uncomfortably honest about the testimony of his past

from the stage that I have watched people leave the room mid-show. ITMOL began like any band does – with a group of unlikely people who don't deserve praise or acclaim for anything – but they continue as not all bands do – faithfully, and faithfully devoted to the praise and acclaim of the one who does deserve it. "Jesus is the foundation of this band and the sole reason it exists. And even if we did fall apart, the words we've spoken and the actions we've taken in the name of Jesus will still stand strong."

With *Shadows* – their third LP – underway, the story of In The Midst

ST OF LIONS



Of Lions, as a band, continues, and the stories of its members, as individuals, are written like stream-of-consciousness, whose author's pen never breaks or slows. "We recorded the new album, titled *Shadows*, in Oakland with Zack Ohren," explains Matt, who elaborates on the progressive direction of the record. Guitarist Sam Penner stepped in to help main writer Ryan McAllister with as more of a voice than ever before. "On a creative standpoint, we want to keep writing music that people will enjoy and that we'll enjoy playing. Heavy, shreddy and catchy," and with a hint of sarcasm (but a more humorous amount of seriousness), "but if I had my way, ITMOL would be a folk/epic metal band along the lines of Ensiferum, Blackguard, Epica ... stuff like that. Haha. But seriously."

As a top-priority "band of brothers" beneath the Facedown Records moniker, ITMOL sometimes seems a strange conglomerate of contrasting interests - like five spouses stuck beneath an "opposites attract" cliché (and they all say that a band is a marriage!) - Alex's love for dubstep and trance, Sam's love for country (and outspoken pre-decision to leave ITMOL in a heartbeat should Garth Brooks ever need a tattooed baldy with earlobes as big as his cowboy hat...), united beneath a common denominator. "I'd have to say that the mission statement since the beginning," says Matt, "has been to love people the way we've been commanded, and to provide them with heavy, Christ-centered music." It is certain that they have been providing, and that they have been provided for. This October, the band took to the skies with Facedown veterans War Of Ages for their first overseas European tour, which is when I connected with vocalist Matt Janssen for the story. "We're actually on our way to Vienna, Austria as we speak. It's a whole new world over here, both in the music scene and culturally in general. Shows are much different over here. Kids are really nice, they like to have fun at shows and there is no hatred towards each other. It's actually very relieving. Also, what

we call moshing back in the States is almost nonexistent here. It's all headbanging and singing along. On the other hand, touring over here is extremely difficult. It is hands down the hardest tour we've ever done. It makes touring in the U.S. feel like a piece of cake."

And so with vision and mission (and any good thing, I suppose) comes sacrifice. Touring artists are, after all, not exempt from the growing pains of age, nor the pestering questioning - whether from within or without - that accompanies maturity. With age comes responsibility and life inevitably weighs down on the minds of young men with a world of possibilities ahead of them. It can be difficult to legitimize living in a stripped-down 15 passenger when weighed against more conventional job, schooling or relational opportunities that come and go in the name of a project. "I'm getting way too old. I'll be 26 on January 7th..." Grandpa Matt ponders. "Yikes! And yes, this is something I think about every day. I'm getting to the age where I really feel like I need to start thinking about 'real life.' I will continue doing this as long as the Lord wills it, but it's almost exciting for me to think about going to school again, getting married someday ... having a 'real' job. Haha. If anyone knows me, they know those things are extremely weird coming out of my mouth, but they are very true! We all have loved ones back home that we miss and would love to be spending time with." In a contemplative tone, "I definitely feel for Alex and his wife while we're out on the road. Especially over here in Europe with almost no means of communication with anyone back home. It can be difficult... but the single ones in the band, Ryan and myself, try to be as supportive as possible when it comes to those things. But again - as long as God wants us here doing what we do, we'll be here."

Against the odds, defying convention, with momentum that has built like a runaway train, In The Midst Of Lions stands encouraged and in pursuit of forward movement in the call of a God who uses means



foolish in the eyes of men to bring about his redemptive ends. Their relationships have been a process, their friendships sanctified into more of a family whose members have been gifted with a camaraderie that keeps them sane on the road... but, brothers pick on brothers... "We like to get under each other's skin from time to time... some tours more than others. Haha. But the thing with us is that somehow it always seems to get worked out. We're brothers, man. We're family. I would do anything for each and every one of my bandmates and I trust that they would do the same for me. These guys are my family. I've seen and been around them more in the past few years than I have my own immediate family. And we've all said basically that if one goes, we all go. We don't really feel that there can be a replacement for any single member. So yeah, this will be the only ITMOL people will ever know...

"...And as for our future, well, obviously we want to continue to grow and mature as a band, creatively, as a ministry and as individuals. As a ministry I feel like lately we have been trying to help people realize that there is a definite purpose that God has in their lives. That no matter how insignificant they feel in the world, with God as their focus, they can do great things. That definitely comes through on the new album."

As the forerunner behind the not-quite-conceptual-enough-to-be-considered-"concept"-but-basically-"concept"-albums that started with ITMOL's sophomore *The Heart Of Man*, Matt Janssen continued *Shadows* in the same lyrically thought-provoking vein, taking inspiration from Moses' story in the biblical account of the Exodus and combining a relatable, modern narrative. "With *Shadows*, I really want to challenge our listeners. I want them to listen to it and realize a need for change; realize that it's time to step up to the plate. With songs like 'Cry of the Oppressed' reminding us that our God is

faithful even in troubled times. There is a lyric in that song that says, 'My throat is raw from screaming and the pain is setting in. What's become of my life? This isn't how I imagined it,' which is basically where I was at in my life before coming to Christ. But the lyrics after that are, 'He is faithful. He has heard my cry.' And it's so true. God is always faithful to his word. He was for me and will be for anyone. There are also a couple of songs with lyrics that are more along the lines of worship that my younger brother, Colter, actually wrote. My favorite song on the album, called 'Take Your Place,' was actually written by him." Janssen's progression as a writer is ever-growing, his boldness ever-increasing, and his vulnerability applaudably noticeable since his days in frontman infancy.

In The Midst Of Lions began as a dream and, after birth, strengthened its legs and arms to crawl. It gummed through the teething process, stood and fell beneath wobbling legs, determined on balance and strength to walk, and endured into a sprint. But "it" is actually "they" – a they who make it up. A they with stories about it, a they with stories that define it, a they with stories that will surpass ITMOL when ITMOL is a memory. At present, hindsight will propel In The Midst Of Lions into the future, as their stories are being told via a machine, a monster, a gift that they are given as much as the listeners they share it with. In the future, we may have the opportunity to look into the eyes of an elderly, modern-day Moses, who began with a stutter – voiceless – to hear the stories of a burning passion that fueled mission in the hearts of the unlikely of men, recounting: My soul was in the midst of lions, but I sang, and I made melodies. Awake, my glory! Awake, O harp and lyre! I gave thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples! I sang praises to you among the nations!

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What Dir En Grey Says

I FIRST HEARD OF THIS BAND AT ONE OF THOSE CHILL SXSW PARTIES. I WAS CHATTING WITH JEFF SIPLER OF CONCRETE MARKETING, WHO TOLD ME THAT THIS BAND THEY WERE WORKING WITH HAD A FOLLOWING (AND A HUGE ENTOURAGE) THAT RIVALLED THE KIND OF RABID APPRECIATION LED ZEPPELIN HAD. THEY WERE ONLY PLAYING ABOUT THREE U.S. SHOWS THAT YEAR AND THEY WERE ALL MASSIVE SELL-OUTS. I WAS INTRIGUED. THEN I FOUND OUT THAT THEY BROUGHT THE METAL ON THEIR OWN TERMS. DID THEY SING IN ENGLISH LIKE ALL THE OTHER FOREIGN BANDS THAT MAKE IT? NOT ON YOUR LIFE. DIR EN GREY ARE COMPELLING, ORIGINAL AND INTENSE. TOO BAD I GOT THE DREADED RESPONSE IN REGARDS TO THE INFAMOUS "JESUS" QUESTION IN THIS INTERVIEW. READ ON AND WEEP.



Prior to the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster, how was the writing and recording of *Dum Spiro Spero* coming along?

Toshiya (drummer): It was going rather well.

What was your general theme or general feelings and ideas going into this recording?

Toshiya: It being our 8th album, I wanted to think about what I could put into it and what I could give individually.

What was unusual or different about this recording going in (again, prior to the earthquake) compared to the *Uroboros* and *The Marrow of a Bone*, *Withering to Death*, *Vulgar* and previous releases.

Toshiya: When creating, we are always trying to get to a place that is not "here."

How did the album's focus – lyrically and mentally – change after the earthquake and subsequent disasters?

Kyo (vocals): There is no direct effect or lyric that I can say was changed, but I think there was an impact on each of us.

What were those first few days like for you all?

Toshiya: A feeling of loss of everyday life and routine.

How were you guys able to collectively re-focus back on Dir En Grey's music and touring, etc?

Toshiya: We reaffirmed that what we are able to collectively do is express the music and world view of Dir En Grey.

Why did you decide to speak out and launch the site *scream4truth.com*?

Shinya (drums): After 3/11, Japan has continued to be in a state where accurate and clear information is not available. This is the same for the band, our fans and people living in Japan who have nothing to do with us as well. We chose to use music as a way to demand the truth.

What are your hopes for this website and by sharing your concerns? If you could cause change with your actions and statements, what would these changes be?

Shinya: To be able to choose your paths of your own will.

How nationalistic do you generally feel for your country (maybe answer for your feelings both before and after this year's events)?

Shinya: Japan is a country that has been said to not have nationalism to begin with. I don't feel there has been a big change in this due to the earthquake, though this is just my opinion.

Compared to how much you do (or do not) identify yourself as a citizen of Japan, how much of a "citizen of the world" do you feel?

Shinya: I have never really thought of this before, but this is an appropriate time to consider it.

What hope does the world have for uniting and thinking as one?

Shinya: Amidst different countries, cultures and languages, I feel it is important to seek union, however I think "to live" is the kind of hope that everyone holds.

What do you think of Jesus Christ?

(Band does not feel it is appropriate for them to comment directly on religions).

What bands have had a great impact on you guys?

Shinya: It is different for each of us. For me it is Japanese rock bands.

What are some memorable moments for any of you in regards to music? (maybe share something that inspired you to be a musician or inspired you in a specific musical direction)

Shinya: The earthquake that happened during our recording and the tragedy that came after it. I will never forget this for the rest of my life.

How would you explain to a young musician the difference between "technical proficiency" and "feeling"? Why are one or both important?

Shinya: It depends on the person, but I think that for either if you are superior to other musicians you will be able to move the hearts of the audience.

Getting back to spirituality, if you had to describe one or two of the most positive aspects of Buddhism, what would they be?

(Band does not feel it is appropriate...)

Note from publicist: "Band does not feel it is appropriate for them to comment directly on religions."

What do you think of his claims to be "the way the truth and the life, no one comes to the father but by me?"

(Band does not feel it is appropriate for them to comment directly on religions).

What are some things that American and European bands should know before they come play in Japan?

Shinya: When speaking to the crowd in English during a show, the crowds typically give a great response, but probably do not have any idea what was said.

Conversely, if you had to describe one or two of the most negative aspects of Buddhism, what would they be?

(Band does not feel it is appropriate...)

How do you think music crosses from intellectual (like notes and formulas) into the emotional and (possibly) spiritual?

Toshiya: First, I think it is a drop of water. That drop of water scatters and ultimately the vessel is filled. Those drops of water are impulse and ultimately they fill and overflow in the person's soul.

In a related question, what are some generally (possibly) unknown things that someone from the U.S., Canada or Western Europe should know before they visit Japan as a tourist? Why? (maybe helpful advice to avoid a funny or sad mistake that is made by a lot of tourists).

Shinya: Japanese people are not very good at responding to foreigners who speak English to them, so it may be good to learn phrases like "Sumimasen" (Excuse me) or "Chotto ii desu ka?" (May I have a moment?) to start with.

Because there is a great distance between the U.S. and Japan, perhaps there are a handful of great bands that we haven't heard much about over here. What are 5 or so bands or albums that every U.S. "hard music" fan should check out? (I'd like to suggest Japanese bands here, but feel free to share from nearby regions if you'd like).

Shinya: I can only think of one – Endo Michiro.

What qualities does music have that other modes of art (like visual art) do not?

Toshiya: Years ahead in the future when you hear it, it has the power to vividly remind you of that time in the past.

What are some funny things the band has done to amuse themselves while on the road?

Shinya: When we toured on the Fair to Midland tour in North America, by chance there were many band members and tour staff who had their birthdates on tour. Members of FTM give unusual hats as presents, the kind that you could not get in Japan, which surprised me.

Is there anything else you'd like to share or talk about?

Shinya: After March, many changes have been happening. Particularly with the problem of radiation, I heard at one point that there is the potential that we may not be able to enter other countries from Japan in the future and I began to think of the worst-case scenario. I am all the more honored to be able to tour North America this December, and feel the importance of living life in the moment and to the fullest.

How has the influence of "Western Culture" (like rock and roll) impacted the culture in Japan?

Toshiya: For better or worse, it blew a new wind into Japan.

What was it like for Kyo to suddenly become deaf in 2000? What was wrong and how did it get better?

Kyo: It was an important thing to cause change. It has not become better.

×



DAVID CROWDER BAND

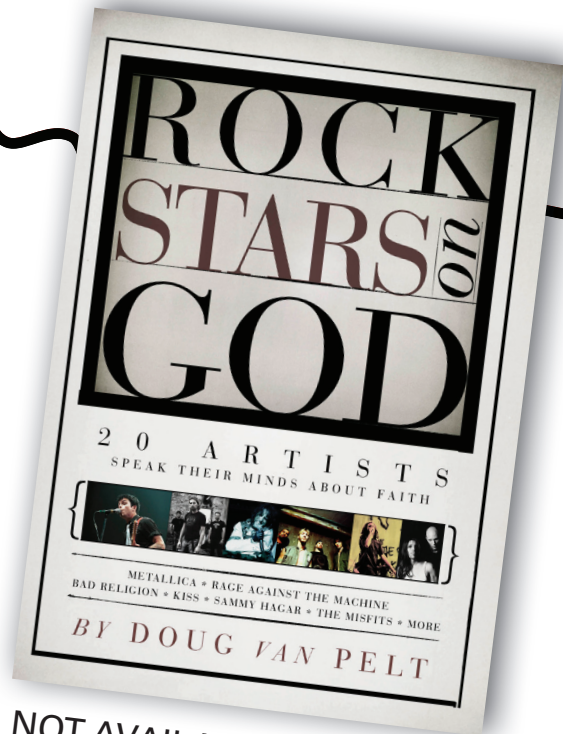
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SHONLOCK

Photo: Gary Rhodes





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Album reviews

49 ALBUMS 54 GEAR, GADGETS, COMICS & FILM



IN THE MIDST OF LIONS *SHADOWS*

St. Louis-based In The Midst of Lions has put together a tight-sounding, but hit-and-miss record with their third official release, Shadows. The band has been gaining momentum, touring relentlessly (as most metal acts do), and soon enough, they'll be touring to support this chug- and breakdown-filled record.

ITMOL kick it off with (what would become a staple of the record) a growling breakdown, echoing the eerie sound-effect-sentiment of the start of the record. But as the riffs continue to hit, there wasn't much to push the first track "False Idols" to the next level. In fact, as the music cuts out and they go to their somewhat scripted "final breakdown," the song almost regresses. You will feel this way through most of the first half of the record. But about halfway through, it seems they hit their stride. "Cry of the Oppressed" gives metal fans the more technical flash that seems to be missing in the first half of the record. The guitar themes allow ITMOL to craft a better song with more dynamics, spicing up some of the otherwise typical chugging breakdowns.

The track "New Beginnings" guts you with its rapid beginning and ends with the technical flash you're going to want more of. In the middle of the too-short "Prepare the Way," you'll hear the best guitar work on the record – but it's also the next to last song. It seems the talent is there, but as a whatever-core act, they go to the breakdown a ton. So, while the production level of the quintet's *Shadows* is great, there isn't enough consistency in this



Rating system

- 05 CLASSIC
- 04 FABULOUS
- 03 SOLID
- 02 SUSPECT
- 01 AMISS
- * 1/2

piece to make heads turn. Will it sound good live? Sure. But if you listen to the whole thing in your car hoping for a “complete” record, you won’t find it.

[FACEDOWN] DAVID STAGG

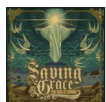


THE SCURVIES

DON'T LET ME GO

Fast, spit-flyin’ old school punk sounds important, urgent and infectious when it’s delivered with the kind of spot-on songwriting and performance found here. It only helps when the mixing, mastering and general production are also handled so well. We all love the old classics, but The Scurvies show real moxy and creative ability by breathing fresh, new life into tried and true formulas like the music they’re playing.

[DELUXE] DOUG VAN PELT



SAVING GRACE

THE KING IS COMING

I don’t think Facedown is going to have a hard time keeping the Spirit-filled metalcore alive with a band like Saving Grace. Their new record, *The King is Coming*, is one of my favorite records of 2011. This is mid-late ‘90s through 2000 metalcore gold. Most bands back then were influenced by American hardcore and European metal. Saving Grace brings European hardcore influences like Arkangel and Reprisal. Then mixes them with American metal influences like Deicide and Slayer. “That sounds like a crazy mix!” You are saying to yourself. “How about the lyrical content?” you ask. Lyrically this record is as Spirit-filled as they come. As well as speaking on the “increasing international crisis and internal corruption” on the song “Habakkuk,” along with Carl of the political hardcore band First Blood. Saving Grace is the king of New Zealand’s mordercore scene, and *The King is Coming* is their septor.

[FACEDOWN] ROB SHAMELESS



A HOPE FOR HOME

IN ABSTRACTION

A Hope For Home’s newest album, *In Abstraction*, is best enjoyed late at night when everyone’s asleep. The album is only seven tracks long, but half of the songs are almost ten minutes long! It’s a very slow and relaxing album and is meant more for listening pleasure than singing along. Fans of Thrice’s *The Alchemy Index* series will definitely enjoy the ambient sound of *In Abstraction*. There is no real way to categorize this album. It’s a genre in and of itself. Do not go into this album expecting quotes to sing along to or intricate music, just play the album and enjoy the sweet sounds.

[FACEDOWN] NICK COTRUFO (TMH)



U2

ACHTUNG BABY 20TH ANNIV. ED.

“Achtung” in U2’s 1991 album *Achtung Baby* is a German word for “wake up,” and if you purchase the Super Deluxe version of this reissue, consider also Google-ing the German expression for “stay awake,” because it’s a full 6 CDs and 4 DVDs all told! However, this lifetime supply of U2 won’t disappoint. From its noisy opening in “Zoo Station” to the tragic blues of “Love Is Blindness,” this is easily one of U2’s most ambitious and accomplished efforts. Without being overtly religious, songs like “Until the End of the World,” all about Judas’ dilemma, or “Acrobat” that takes on the oftentimes paradoxical Christian life, there is plenty of food for spiritual folk. U2 experimented with dance sounds during the ‘90s, which is evidenced on *Achtung Baby*, but not at the expense of fantastic guitar rock. Despite the nightclub groove of tracks like “Mysterious Ways,” The Edge has never sounded better or more rocking. (The album finds U2 playing the sonic acrobat, if you will). While there are plenty of variations on the original form to dig through, the disc subtitled *Kindergarten*, with its original song titles renamed with the word “Baby” preceding each, may be of most interest to true U2 diehards. These are raw and unvarnished versions of originally issued tracks. “‘Baby’ Love Is Blindness” is – if you can believe it – even more painful than the official version. Just when you thought you couldn’t love this album any more, a re-release comes along and proves you dead wrong.

[ISLAND/INTERSCOPE/UMI] DAN MACINTOSH



AS I LAY DYING

DECAS

Ten years ago I booked my third show ever at a youth house in the basement. The band that I booked? As I Lay Dying. A decade has passed and AILD has become one of the most influential metal bands in this generation. To celebrate their ten year milestone AILD has come out with *Decas*, with three new tracks to tide fans over ‘til their next full length. There’s a re-recorded track off their debut record, *Beneath the Encasing of Ashes*, along with three amazing cover tracks from metal legends Slayer and Judas Priest. As well as one fantastic cover of the classic punk band The Descendents. Then one dub step version of a song from the last four records, which I am still getting used to. I love techno, but this is just out of my element a little. All in all, it is a great record to have if your boyfriend or girlfriend loves dub step and you love metal.

[METAL BLADE] ROB SHAMELESS



KIROS

OUTLAWS AND PRODIGALS

This fun bunch from Canada released a three-song teaser to tide its growing fanbase over until their new full-length album (*Lay Your Weapons Down*) drops in 2012. One of these three is an acoustic version of the title-track, so “tease” is the operative word here. While not departing too far from its melodic rock past, these tunes lean heavily in the polished pop direction a la Red Jumpsuit Apparatus, Saosin, Three Days Grace or any number of *Warped Tour* bands – particularly in the title track. Frontman/bassist Barry Mackichan’s vocals take center stage behind smart but subliminal accompaniment that join a beautiful string section that invite massive singing-along moments. In other words, if you’re in line at a retail store waiting to buy the last-stocked copy of this album, brace yourself for an onslaught of girls waiting to snatch it outta your hands.

[ANGR] KERN COUNTY KID, THE

Ratings

	DV	Writer
In the Midst of Lions <i>Shadows</i>	04	03
The Scurvies <i>Don't Let Me Go</i>	03*	
Saving Grace <i>The King is Coming</i>	04	04*
A Hope for Home <i>In Abstraction</i>	03*	03*
U2 <i>Achtung Baby (20th Anniv. Edition)</i>	03*	05
As I Lay Dying <i>Decas</i>	04	04
Kiros <i>Outlaws and Prodigals</i>	04	
Grave Robber <i>You're All Gonna Die</i>	03*	03*
Theatre Breaks Loose <i>Stranger Places, Greater Things</i>	03	04
Lance King <i>A Moment in Chiro</i>	04	
Randy Stonehill <i>Spirit Walk</i>	03*	04
Jars of Clay <i>Gather and Build: A Collection</i>		03
Austrian Death Machine <i>Jingle All the Way</i>	03	04*
Theocracy <i>As the World Bleeds</i>	04	04*
O'Brother <i>Garden Window</i>	04	

**GRAVE ROBBER**

YOU'RE ALL GONNA DIE

If you could not get enough of Grave Robber this summer with their re-release of *Exhumed*, then you are in luck. *You're All Gonna Die* has six new studio tracks, along with four live tracks. These boys do not mess around. They come even harder with their amazing '80s horror punk and mid '90s punk rock and their Bad Religion *Gray Race*-era influenced song, "Invisible Man," which threw me for a loop the first time I heard it. If they come through your city, make sure you take them to the city's haunted house. Be sure to have plenty of weapons to ward off ghosts. They are Grave Robber. You are dang straight they "believe in ghosts." In this scene where zombies run rampant, Grave Robber will make sure they know one thing: "Hey zombies, *You're All Gonna Die!*"

[ROTTWEILER] ROB SHAMELESS

**THEATRE BREAKS LOOSE**

STRANGER PLACES, GREATER THINGS

When I think of Theatre Breaks Loose, I think of high-power guitars, booming bass and fast-paced, in-your-face metal that leaves you in awe. That's not what you get with this band's debut album. Rather, you get something very similar to Kings of Leon or bands of the like. I'll be honest, in this case, it's better. I like being taken off-guard, especially with music. This album is great, the lyrics are strong and intelligent, the guitars and pace of the music keep you interested and into it and give you an all-around good listening experience. If you like Kings of Leon, you will love this album. The only criticism I have is that the album is very short and I wanted more, more, more. When I sit and listen to this CD, I can picture Theatre Breaks Loose on stage with Gungor or a contemporary worship band. Go pick up this CD and, I promise you, you will not be disappointed. [LOOSE] REGGIE EDWARDS

**LANCE KING**

A MOMENT IN CHIROS

While similar in many ways, I think I prefer Lance King's voice to Dream Theater's James LaBrie. They can both get all tender and melodic on us, but King's got a little more power and gusto. After numerous band projects (Balance of Power, Pyramaze), this is his first solo project. Given his propensity to make prog-metal, it's no wonder that the output came together as a concept album of sorts. The concept is loosely based upon the "11:11 time prompt" phenomena, which is weird. It's a lot to wrap your head around, but the musical package is top-notch.

[NIGHTMARE] DOUG VAN PELT

**RANDY STONEHILL**

SPIRIT WALK

In 1989, Randy Stonehill released *Return To Paradise*, which was viewed by many as the singer/songwriter revisiting one of his early classic albums, *Welcome To Paradise*. However, the artist's latest CD, *Spirit Walk* is an even truer return to form. The album is stripped-down folk-rock, much like his pivotal Sold Rock favorite, with lyrics that similarly adhere closely to basic spiritual themes. The album opens with "Blood Transfusion and a Coca Cola," which finds Stonehill demanding, "Put some rock & roll on the Victrola!" And that's exactly what he does throughout. Whether it's the jangling rock of "Try Havin' Some Faith," or the electric riff rock of "Remember the Devil," Stonehill never fails to please, in the old familiar way. *Spirit Walk* proves that, while the music business is tough these days, Randy Stonehill is still extremely good. It's more than a little bit of paradise. [STONEHILLIAN] DAN MACINTOSH

JARS OF CLAY

GATHER AND BUILD: A COLLECTION

Jars Of Clay is a restless band, which is the best kind. This collection spans the group's long career. Admirably, this is not all the obvious stuff. Yes, "Flood" is contained within, but it's presented in an alternate, "New Rain Mix" version. Jars Of Clay is restless in that it's never afraid to try anything once. Therefore, this set opens with the acoustic folk classic, "This Land Is Your Land," which is followed up by "Closer," which can best be described as subdued synth-pop. The group returns to emotional folk with another acoustic song, "Oh My God," which is preceded by the driving worship rock of "We Will Follow" that also features Gungor. No matter the style, however, every song boasts Dan Haseltine's easily recognizable singing voice. Yes, this band has gathered and built quite a good thing, indeed. [NOISETRADE] DAN MACINTOSH

AUSTRIAN DEATH MACHINE

JINGLE ALL THE WAY

Tim Lambesis is back with yet another Christmas EP/seven-inch ... with three great songs themed after scenes in the *Jingle All the Way* movie, like: "I'm not a pervert," where Howard (Schwarzenegger) is attacked by a mob of moms for trying to get back a lottery ball from a little girl to get a Turbo Man action figure. "It's turbo time" is Turbo Man's check phase, and if ADM did a theme song for the movie this would be it. With both Josh Robert Thompson ("It's Turbo Time") and Chad Ackerman ("I'm Not A Pervert") as Ahhnold, this is a great way to end 2011. [METAL-BLADE] ROB SHAMELESS

**THEOCRACY**

AS THE WORLD BLEEDS

Since their inception, Atlanta-based Theocracy has been delivering the highest quality power metal in the business. Matt Smith once told me in an interview that he wanted to be known as, "the band that never released a filler song." That fact remains evident on *As The World Bleeds*, because this newest incarnation (now a 5-piece) of the band has yet again delivered the goods. Perhaps a bit less progressive than previous work, fans of Euro power metal will be dazzled. Heavy, melodic and replete with plenty of blistering guitar work – the guys really sound like a touring force now. Lyrically, from the opening moments of the epic "I Am" to the closing title track, this has got to be one of the most compelling/convicting/uplifting collections of songs ever released within the scene. The truth never sounded so good, so give these guys the praise they deserve. "Worship at 11," baby! [ULTERIUM] JONATHAN SWANK

**O'BROTHER**

GARDEN WINDOW

This little brother to me without you (at least that would be a casual and, yes, unfair label) has now grown past the subtle similarities with a powerful and ferocious new album. Triple Crown Records (who released the early xdiscipleX A.D. albums) signed this busy touring band and put them in the studio with Manchester Orchestra's Andy Hull and Robert McDowell as producers with Mike Sapone (Brand New, Public Enemy, Taking Back Sunday) to mix. It's a heavier, grungier sonic palette, but wonderfully happy at the same time. Vocalist/guitarist Tanner Merritt takes center stage with some confident crooning that's supported by his bandmates in all the right places. The drums in "Sputnik" and the roots rock BGVs sound riveting. The band gets all chaotic and heavy during "Machines Part-1" and "Machines Part-II" gets a little doomy, drone-y and Sabbath with a heavy low end on the song's tail end. Wonderful dynamics that are balanced out with whispery moments like the verses in "Bear." A very special album.

[TRIPLE CROWN] DOUG VAN PELT

**PHIL KEAGGY**

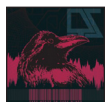
LIVE FROM KEGWORTH STUDIO

With *Live from Kegworth Studio*, Phil Keaggy has recorded mostly acoustic versions of fan favorites. By significantly reducing sonic traffic, this disc gives listeners a chance to appreciate Keaggy, the singer. Everyone knows about his amazing guitar skills, but "Give You A Song" is a beautiful song, beautifully sung. Keaggy also plays the role of interpreter for "Here Comes The Sun," the George Harrison song of hope, and "Make You Feel My Love," a Bob Dylan tune. Keaggy oldies also come off well, including "Your Love Broke Through" and "What A Day." For those that may want to focus on the master's musicianship alone, there are two instrumentals, "Shades of Green" and "Legacy." Keaggy says he sang his heart out when he recorded these tracks, and it shows. **[STROBE] DAN MACINTOSH**

**IONA**

ANOTHER REALM

It's almost too tiresome to say so, and though their palette is arguably formed of limited musical hues, Iona are nigh uniformly excellent and imaginative. The Celtic prog rockers have pulled out many stops for their latest studio album by making it a double CD set and, in a move familiar to them from the past, a concept album of sorts. It's a might looser than some such efforts, but it allows for the band's powerful majesty and more serene textures to be captured nigh unfettered. If they can get the interest of a U.S. label interested in promoting them to Christian radio, they have more than one number primed for play on more accepting inspirational and adult contemporary outlets, Iona's likelier fodder for the formats in over 15 years. And though there are more than a couple of spaces where the sonically new agey peacefulness veers on the overwhelming, singer Joanne Hogg and her boys whoop up an Emerald Isle storm. A couple of portions in the lyric booklet speaks of "recent prophecies" and quotes from an author who seems to take a pantheistic viewpoint of nature, but, thankfully, the tunes don't comport too strongly to those themes. If you've already been an Iona fan, you'll have this on high rotation in no time. If you're yet needing an introduction, *Another Realm* makes for a deep, musically worthwhile first journey. **[OPEN SKY] JAMIE LEE RAKE**

**QUIET SCIENCE**

DARK WORDS ON DARK WINGS

After way too many late nights in the shadows of pulsing techno and rave clubs throbbing well past curfew, my aching body needed some rest. The soft gelatinous membranes under my thinning hair were only built to absorb so many low frequency thumps. Somehow the Facebook page for Quiet Science lit up with its current playlist and my slumber fled as the last shades of night were pushed away with the sunlit rays that were making me squint on the side of my sheetless mattress. This melodramatic band had just what I needed – the infectious melody minus the techno. My Shiny Toy without the Guns. I took *Dark Words on Dark Wings* on a top-down trip to swallow three breakfast tacos and complete my ritual of waking up. "The Dust Storm" lulls the ears to attention with a slow and epic intro, which follows a long, meandering instrumental opening track. It'll grab you the way a duet between Enya and Martin Smith (Delirious) might. The band adds some beats to the mix for "Runner," which starts off declaring: "I am rubble, I am stone fallen to pieces and I don't know how I can get things back to they way they were before." Not necessarily unfamiliar and slightly derivative, but a good way to remind us of the things we liked about the '80s without surrendering to the decade's cheap methods and still-developing keyboard sounds. Not musical geniuses, but like the name implies, Quiet Science creates some smart alternative pop/rock. **[LAST SATELLITE] KERN COUNTY KID, THE**

IMMORTAL SOULS

IV: THE REQUIEM FOR THE ART OF DEATH

Facedown has never had a hard time finding great metal bands. Kokkola, Finland's Immortal Souls is no exception. I was surprised to see that Immortal Souls was still on the label, seeing they have not put out anything since their record *Wintereich* in 2006. I was shocked and excited to see this band was still a band with there new record *IV: The Requiem for the Art of Death*. This record has everything you want from overseas death metal (or as some call it winter metal.) This is a great true metal record. It is riffastic, has spot-on solos, and classic overseas death metal vocals like you would hear on a Dark Tranquility, Soilwork, or Behemoth record. Immortal Souls is not a band that should be overlooked. If you are a true metalhead, this is going to be one of your favorite records of 2011. **[FACEDOWN] ROB SHAMELESS**

**ABSOLVED**

THIS ONE GOES TO SEVEN (EP)

Raw almost gutter punk comes at you fast on Absolved's new six-song EP (I know, with a title like that you might expect seven tracks, though "Walking Dead" could've been thrown out with its silly romp). "Relentless Leathernecks" pumps along with all-out energy that's duplicated in a cover of The Misfits' "Halloween." At a total running time of 10 minutes and 23 seconds, the fun is almost over before it started, but it's an old school gas nevertheless. **[THUMPER PUNK] DOUG VAN PELT**

Ratings

	DV	Writer
Phil Keaggy <i>Live from Kegworth Studio</i>	04	04
Iona <i>Another Realm</i>	04	04
Quiet Science <i>Dark Words on Dark Wings</i>	04	03
Immortal Souls <i>IV: The Requiem for the Art of Death</i>	04	04*
Absolved <i>This One Goes to Seven</i>	03	

Gift Guide

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MUSIC, GIFTS & GADGETS



FRETLIGHT

Perfect for the guy or girl who always wanted to be a rock star, but never had the time or talent, the new Fretlight guitar teaches individuals how to play thanks to video guitar lessons that drive a series of lights embedded in the neck. Simply follow the lights with your fingers and you'll be rocking out in no time. This is a real, nice guitar though, not a toy! Range in price from \$499 - \$799.



BRAINSTRING ADVANCE

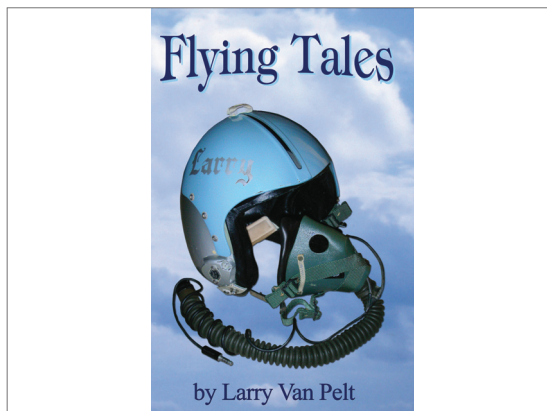
Touted as the "Rubik's cube of the next generation," the Brainstring Advance builds on the success of Recent Toy's top-selling puzzle. This advanced version adds more sides, colored strings and easy-to-grasp rubber tips. More challenging than the original, Brainstring Advanced will stretch your puzzle-solving skills to the next level.



GEOMATE.JR

Ever been geocaching? If you haven't experienced the trendy fun time outdoors, get off your seat and try it! The Geomate.jr comes preloaded with 250,000 geocaches covering all 50 states (or your country.) Just switch on the Geomate.jr, then follow the distance and arrow to the closest Geocache. See, we told you it was easy! The Geomate.jr will display the 20 closest geocaches to your location. The Geomate.jr also gives you information about the geocache such as cache ID, difficulty, terrain and size.

Worried about getting lost? Don't be. You can set and save your home waypoint with the Geomate.jr, so you can always find your way home. The Geomate.jr also saves your found caches, so you can review your found list at any time.



FLYING TALES

Check out the latest book from HM Press: *Flying Tales*, written by the father of *HM Magazine* Editor Doug Van Pelt.

As Larry Van Pelt looked back over fifty years of flying experiences as a fighter pilot, combat pilot, test pilot, and general aviation pilot many memorable moments came to mind. His grandchildren convinced him to begin putting those 'moments' onto paper. The result was a weekly "flying tale." This book is a compilation of 100 of those "tales."

LIFEstyle



FENDER KURT COBAIN JAGUAR

Fender is very proud to introduce one of the most distinctive signature models in its history, the Kurt Cobain Jaguar guitar, meticulously modeled on the battered 1965 Jaguar that the Nirvana singer, guitarist and songwriter wielded during the heady and meteoric early-'90s era when the band burst out of the Pacific Northwest, ruled rock and led a musically stunning and culturally subversive movement.

Fender craftsmen have reproduced Cobain's battle-hardened left-handed Jaguar down to the last unusual detail, including its worn finish, dual humbucking pickups and unique electronics and controls (which were already in place when Kurt acquired the guitar in summer 1991). Unique features include an alder body with road-worn aged finish and hardware treatment, bound fretboard with pearloid dot markers, Stratocaster headstock shape with 1950s-style "spaghetti" logo under the finish, DiMarzio® humbucking DP103 PAF 36th Anniversary neck pickup and DP100 Super Distortion bridge pickup, triple knurled "chrome-dome" knob configuration (volume-volume-tone), three-position toggle switch, black chrome Adjusto-Matic™ bridge and Gotoh® sealed tuners. The guitar will be available in right- and left-handed versions. Accessories include a black textured vinyl hard-shell case and an exclusive Fender Kurt Cobain book featuring extensive photos and commentary by Charles Peterson and an insightful interview with Nirvana guitar tech Earnie Bailey. [fender.com]

gear



GRIFFIN GUITAR CONNECT CABLE FOR IPAD

The cable you need, to use iShred LIVE or other effects apps with your guitar, bass or keyboard. Of course, it also comes in handy to do home studio recording with the Garage Band app. The GuitarConnect Cable turns your iPhone, iPod or iPad into the most portable guitar rig/practice room/studio you've ever used. Connect the cable's 1/4" plug to your guitar, bass, or keyboard; then open iShred LIVE or other instrument effects apps.

As quickly as you can tap your Multi-Touch display, the GuitarConnect cable and iShred LIVE plug you into a virtual pedal board with guitar effects, digital tuner, metronome and playalong/practice player that allows you to play along with your favorite songs, or practice tricky sections. No need to lug out the amp; no more neighbors yelling for you to "turn it DOWN...!" Just a super-compact practice rig you can use with your headphones to rock wherever you are, whenever you want.

Tuck your iPhone into a pocket and you're playing without being tied down (excellent for practicing windmills from atop your coffee table). And because The GuitarConnect Cable provides a standard 1/8" (3.5 mm) stereo mini jack, you can plug in your headphones, or an AUX cable (we suggest our own excellent Auxiliary Audio Cable) and play into your home stereo, amp, control board, whatever. [griffintechology.com]



AKG PERCEPTION 120 USB MICROPHONE

Got a podcast? Rehearse with a band? Do any home studio recording?

The Perception 120 USB is the very first USB-equipped microphone from AKG, offering studio-quality sound performance without requiring any installation or drivers. With the widespread USB standard and its ease of use, this new model allows users without any recording experience to make professional-quality recordings from their home. It is a real plug-and-play device enabling customers to do podcasts, voiceovers and studio-quality rehearsal-recordings quickly and easily. In its class, the Perception 120 USB is the only USB microphone with an integrated analogue-to-digital converter with 24-bit and 128x oversampling. Instead of usual one-chip-solutions the high-quality analogue-to-digital converter provides convincing sound quality and low noise.

The Perception 120 USB includes a two-third-inch condenser capsule with a low-mass diaphragm delivering accurate sonic details, an integrated pop filter that avoids plosives, a switchable bass cut filter and an attenuation switch. It supports Windows XP, Windows Vista and MAC OS X but also the new Windows 7. The Perception 120 USB comes complete with everything you need: a tripod table stand, a swivel mount, a quick start guide and an USB cable. [akg.com]

LIFEstyle

gadgets



GRIFFIN IPHONE 4 CASES

I love the new iPhone 4S, but almost all of the cases I've tried on it make it feel heavier and bulkier (even the slim MC Escher case I bought). I find these ultra-light Threadless cases (the older series of which are on sale) and the Rick Nielsen Signature Series to be the best. They don't wrap over the top, so it won't prevent a top skid scratch, but they make your phone feel like it's lost weight. [griffintechology.com] *Doug Van Pelt*

[Setup Ease: A+ | Performance: A+ | Price: \$9 - \$29]



HELO TC

Ever since man learned to fly he's been wanting to control a tiny helicopter with his iPhone. This lightweight thing zips around at high speeds and is, thus, not easy to master. While not recommended for outdoor use, it's likely to bang upside your ceiling and

walls during early flights. It does feature durable bumpers and flexible wings, so the fun need not turn into quick disappointment after several crashes. It charges with a USB cable and runs on a free app. [helotc.com] *DV* [Setup Ease: A | Performance: B | Price: \$49]

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CLICKER

If you're watching the NFL playoffs and someone hands you a cold bottle of Mountain Dew, don't chip your teeth trying to get the bottle cap off, just use the universal remote control. That's right ... this thing actually exists. [myclicker.com] *DV*

[Setup Ease: B+ | Performance: A- | Price: \$24]



TERRA 6 INTERCONNECTS

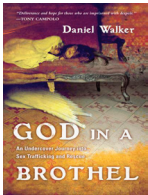
Flat cables were a great invention and the Wireworld Series 6 audio interconnect cables add that innovation to their already great cables - w/little things like oxygen-free copper wiring and gold plated plugs. It's hard to do better and they're priced fairly.

[wireworldcable.com] *DV* [Setup Ease: A+ | Performance: A+ | Price: \$22]



LIFEstyle

books & graphic novels



GOD IN A BROTHEL | DANIEL WALKER

This is the true story of an undercover investigator's experiences infiltrating the multi-billion-dollar global sex industry. It is the personal story of Daniel Walker, one man who followed a path of costly discipleship, agonizing failure and unlikely redemption. And it is a challenge to God's people to join in the battle that all might be freed.. [IVP Books]



THE ACTION BIBLE: CHRISTMAS STORY

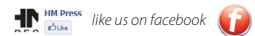
This comic book is a short sample of the full-blown *Action Bible*, which is illustrated by Marvel and DC Comics artist, Sergio Cariello. 17 pages chronicle the foretold prophecies and birth of Christ. The angelic visitations and the consternation on King Herod's face are most notably effective at communicating the stories within the story. A really nice teaser for *The Action Bible New Testament* (due out in Spring). Aimed for "juveniles," the back page of this 99-cent comic is a black and white outlined illustration from the book for coloring. [David C. Cook]

New Release Date: January 31



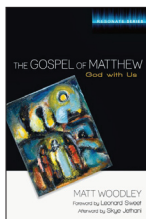
Volume 2 of the popular *Rock Stars on God* series. This collection of 25 interviews from the pages of HM Magazine features:

Thrice, Collective Soul, Taking Back Sunday, Extreme, Megadeth, Fight (Rob Halford, Judas Priest), Chris Cornell (Soundgarden), Morbid Angel, King Diamond, Cradle of Filth, Dimmu Borgir, HIM, Slayer, Meshuggah, Killswitch Engage, Slipknot, Lamb of God, Type O Negative, Every Time I Die, The Alarm, Midnight Oil, Scott Stapp (Creed), My Chemical Romance, Ronnie James Dio.



THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW: GOD WITH US | MATT WOODLEY

In this journey through the Gospel of Matthew, Matt Woodley considers the audacious idea of a God with us – confronting us in the midst of all we've invested ourselves in and dedicated ourselves to, and encouraging us with the promise that the God who made us has a better life in mind for us. The Scriptures become a meeting ground where God is confronted with the pressing concerns of our day, and we are confronted in turn with a fresh experience of God's truth. [likewisebooks.com]



STEEPLE ENVY | VICTOR CUCCIA

When Vic Cuccia was assigned a Rob Bell interview for *HM Magazine*, it kinda changed his life. It led to his resignation from his church pastorship position. A startling revelation for this magazine editor. Years later Cuccia has penned a book about the new direction he took and how churches in America today seem to have gotten off the path Jesus wanted us on. Pastors as rock stars? Compelling. [re:THINK] DV

LIFEstyle

film



GOD BLESS OZZY OSBOURNE

Spoiler alert! I'm going to bring up some details that you might want to skip prior to watching this film. There. You've been warned...

So, I'm watching this well-done documentary on Ozzy Osbourne that was spear-headed by his now-famous son, Jack, and I'm contemplating the title (as I'm sure most spiritual people might) and I keep waiting for a moment where it becomes relevant in a practical way. This poster man for evil in the eyes of the PMRC has had many rumors cast about him, including popular ones in the late '80s that he converted to Christianity (which he denied in interviews afterwards – "I'm no more born again than I am a Satanist!"), but this documentary shows him with more human depth than the popular reality TV show, *The Osbournes*. We not only see his normal side that the show exposed, but he tells all here and we hear about that out-of-control side with candid interviews about his chemical abuse and rock and roll lifestyle. It was over-the-top, which leads to the movie's most profound moment. He didn't seriously sober up until his son Jack made a remarkable statement. Ozzy was chiding him for complaining whilst having every material thing he wanted. Ozzy asked him, "What else could you possibly want?" And his son replied flatly, "How 'bout (being) a dad?" That floored the famous frontman and got his attention. So, the documentary moves on, not glossing over the tragedies, highlights and low points, but not much in the form of the big redemptive payoff I was hoping for. And then it comes. Without saying a word Ozzy concludes the monologue that ends the film and seemingly goes back to his workout routine that was highlighted previously. And then he does something profound. He walks over to the door, gently kneels down and prays. It would appear that, during this unspoken moment before the credits roll that Ozzy blesses God.

[Eagle Rock Entertainment] Doug Van Pelt

[Cuss: 150+ | Gore: 0 | Sex: 2 | Spiritual Conversations: 50]



DOCTOR WHO: THE COMPLETE SIXTH SERIES

The 6-disc set combines all 13 episodes of the new season from award-winning lead writer and executive producer Steven Moffat (*Sherlock*, *The Adventures of Tintin*), along with the 2010 Holiday Special, *A Christmas Carol*, starring Harry Potter's Michael Gambon, plus hours of bonus features.

The series follows the adventures of the Doctor, a mysterious traveler who journeys throughout

all of time and space, picking up companions along the way. ©BAFTA nominee Matt Smith (the Doctor), Karen Gillan (Amy Pond), Arthur Darvill (Rory) and Alex Kingston (River Song) are back when the Doctor faces his date with death and learns a lot more about the mysterious River Song. Guest stars include Mark Sheppard (*Supernatural*, *Battlestar Galactica*), Hugh Bonneville (*Downton Abbey*, *Notting Hill*), supermodel Lily Cole (*The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus*), James Corden (Gavin & Stacey, *The History Boys*), and David Walliams (*Little Britain*, *Come Fly With Me*). Catch a surprise appearance by NBC's Meredith Vieira in the series finale as well as Michael Sheen (*The Twilight Saga*, *Midnight in Paris*), who voices a character in Neil Gaiman's episode and Imelda Staunton (*Cranford*, *Vera Drake*), who voices a character in Tom MacRae's episode. Executive producers are Piers Wenger (*Upstairs Downstairs*, *Ashes to Ashes*) and Beth Willis (*Life on Mars*, *Ashes to Ashes*). Not easy to get into, but charming to those that do. [BBC]



MXPX BOTH ENDS BURNING

The text on the screen near the opening lends all the credence needed to show why this great veteran band gets this sit-down and peek-behind-the-scenes documentary. The music takes a back seat, but it succeeds wildly on the "get to know the band" level. It's quite endearing to hear the band members tell stories and watch them go through storage and memorabilia. At the tail end we see a live performance of "Punk Rawk Show," with the audience screaming along. [Left Coast Films]

[Cuss: 0 | Gore: 0 | Sex: 0 | Spiritual Conversations: 90] DV

THE SHUNNING

Set not too far from where the Purple Door festival is held (near Lancaster, PA), this film peels back some of the mystique of the quiet Amish people. The main character, Katie Lapp (Danielle Panabaker), has always struggled with the rules that define her sheltered Amish community, but when a wealthy outsider (Sherry Stringfield, *ER*) begins asking questions about her family, Katie begins to wonder about her origins. What connection does this woman have to her life ... and how will unraveling the secrets challenge Katie's faith? Directed by Michael Landon Jr., Beverly Lewis' *The Shunning* is a powerful, personal journey of discovery based on the famous novel by the *New York Times* bestselling author. [Sony Pictures] DV



LUTHER 2

Cops with rough edges and good hearts always make for compelling stories and such is the case for this BBC television series. The darkness and dirtiness of the characters and subject matter get slightly balanced by the normalcy of a detective's job routine, but the pacing and performance requires a little patience and loyalty to get hooked and persevere through it. [BBC] DV

[Cuss: 50+ | Gore: 8 | Sex: 0.3 | Spiritual Conversations: 40]

PEARL JAM TWENTY

If you're lucky and your band sells millions and millions and millions of albums and you manage to stay together for at least 20 years, then you can have big-time talent like Cameron Crowe to make your definitive band documentary. It's a fun-to-watch film that starts at the end of Mother Love Bone and the audition of Eddie Vedder and covers all the highs and lows between – including Kurt Cobain's suicide and the infamous stand against Ticketmaster. Overall, the film achieves what the band has done for so many – inspiration.

[Columbia] DV [Cuss: 150+ | Gore: 0 | Sex: 0 | Spiritual Conversations: 20]



KEY to Ratings = number of scenes w/cussing, gratuitous sex, violence & how easy it would be to start a "spiritual conversation" after viewing it with someone.

The Christian & Art

WITH KEMPER CRABB

The Disconnect: Why Evangelicals Make Bad Art (Part the Twenty-ninth)

We've been exploring in these articles the question of why it is that millions of Evangelicals in America have produced so little quality art of any sort, and have seen that this is largely due to limited (and/or distorted) views of Biblical teaching (or a failure to act on the implications of these teachings), despite the fact that Scripture equips Christians for "every good work" (2 Tim. 3: 16-17), one of which is creating art.

We examined the damaging effects of deficient theology on the doctrines of Creation and Eschatology, effects which produce devaluations of matter and time as apropos theaters of God's Glory, resulting in pessimism about history, and in viewing the world as effectively belonging to Satan, as only something to be escaped from.

Non-Biblical ideas concerning the Holy Trinity lead to a picture of mankind as simplistic machines rather than the bearers of God's Image, as well as to the destruction of symbol as showing both multiple and unified at the same time.

We turned then to an examination of the Incarnation of Christ, in Which God joined Himself to Humanity in the God-Man Jesus, "at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood; truly God and truly Man" (Council of Chalcedon, A.D. 451), and saw that many Evangelicals hold a view of the Incarnation which sees Jesus' Humanity as only peripheral to His Divinity, and ignore His Humanity, denigrating the human as a legitimate sphere of spirituality.

In the last article, we saw how this aberrant view of the Incarnation can lead to devaluation of the fact of Christ's Growth and Human Development, which in turn discounts the valuation of regular human growth in time as unimportant to God's Purposes, so that men are seen in a deformed fashion.

The Lord Jesus, fully God and fully Man, has risen from the dead still Incarnate (Ephesians 2: 20-21), still Enfleshed, as He will be forever. The Body He assumed along with the Rest of His Humanity is like our own, except for His Unfallen Absence of sin. Yet, as we've seen in previous articles, Jesus ate and drank, slept, sang, suffered, and so forth, as an Embodied Human.

His Humanity required Spirit, Soul, and Body, which only together make a Complete Humanity (Hebrews 4:12). Genesis 2:7 tells us that God first formed Adam's body, and then breathed the spirit of life into

him, and only then did man become a "living being." Man's spirit was created after his body, perhaps to complete it. Nonetheless, only these elements together comprise humanity as God intends.

Our bodies, though subject now to death because of sin, are intended to last forever as our habitations. The sundering of body and spirit at death is a monstrous perversion, one to be remedied by the Resurrection of the Dead on Doomsday.

As 1 Corinthians 15: 42-58 tells us, our salvation is not complete until our bodies are raised and transfigured to be like Christ's (1 John 3:2). Our bodies are meant to last forever. This means that the body and the spirit are not opposed; it was sin which affected both body and spirit at the Fall of Man, bringing death to both, not the physicality of the body alienating it from the spirit.

The physical body is rather the arena of spirituality, the offering of which is a spiritual offering, as Paul tells us in Romans 12: 1-3.

The body is not worth less than the spirit; it takes both to be human (and achieve individual destiny before God...). There is no hard hierarchy betwixt spirit and body: both are necessary to God's Purposes for humanity and to properly reflect the Image of God.

It does, after all, take the body to do most of the good works prepared from before the foundation of the world for us to perform (Ephesians 2: 8-10). What is the implication of these facts for the making of art?

Simply that limiting the subject or content of our art to "spiritual" matters while ignoring those of "physical" (or what is sometimes erroneously called "secular" matters) is actually an implicit denial of true Biblical spirituality, which necessarily involves and includes the physical world and all of Reality as the arena of God's Presence, Activity, and Revelation.

All art, if it is to be Incarnational and Biblical, must neither implicitly or explicitly deny the value of the body in God's Plans, or it will end up as an expression of a sub-Biblical view of the world, and thus fail to serve God.

[kempercrabb.net]

Guest editorial by Chad Johnson

WHY QUIT?

In fairly routine fashion the enemy (Satan, the devil, and all the powers of wickedness that stand on his fiery side) try convincing us that we ought give up on the Christian race. On a bad day, I'm not convinced we need any help from a mostly-invisible opponent the world at large doesn't even believe in. When it comes to the temptation of throwing in the towel on faith (or on a calling God has placed over my life) I'm a pretty viable candidate for my own undoing. I was in conversation with a friend yesterday about how it seems our greatest strength many times proves to be what is most often shot at ... whether by the devil or at our very own hands. If honesty were to be a slightly closer friend, the odds are strong that we might often fight as our own worst enemy. By no means am I underestimating the power of the devil or demonic forces. Both Jesus and His disciples consistently fought evil powers – and prevailed! As a son of the living King, my fears are not to be caught up in the powers of the air, for their days are all numbered and their end is imminent Hell. This is war. We are fooling ourselves to see life as anything but a battle. What beauty in serving a risen Christ who has already conquered death, hell and even the battle itself. I am learning to be most concerned with my own actions or attitudes that lead me to stray from the promises of God. I can't control how or when Satan may assault me (though I can be prepared when he does!); I can take greater ownership of my own thoughts and deeds.

Paul laid it out like this:

Don't you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win! All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified. (1 Corinthians 9: 24-27, NLT)

Press on towards the prize. Run and win! Purpose the steps you take. You'll never beat air into anything worth the effort. My plea, my cry, my conviction is that we all need the reminder to carry on. A couple years ago I felt it would be a good idea to signify the commitment I was taking to pursue the Gospel as my grandest treasure; hoping to rescue the hearts (even be that one!) of a generation. My friend Russ loves tattoos, so it wasn't long before idea took form in 8 letters spelled in ink on our knuckles. Regardless of whether or not you deem this decision good or bad, God has used a seemingly foolish idea to serve as a constant reminder that giving up is not possible. I am marked to live. No matter how trying the conditions, or tempting the voices, quitting is a word I don't ever want to know. I'm humbled to type out a note nearly 3 years later, clearly seeing all God has done. Most importantly, He keeps my heart in love with Him. I still love Jesus! I'm still crazy about a relationship of intimacy with my Father, with the Son, and with the Holy Spirit! God still speaks to and through me. Have there been crazy seasons of silence? Yes. Did I consider walking away? Yep. Have I wondered whether God is real or that He could ever love a wretch like me? Of course I have.

Even so, his love wins. Not only has it won, it is winning. The love of God has no end. It won once and continues to win daily. Life is but a vapor. Live!

—Chad Johnson

New Zealand {Our Story} | A Come&Live! Documentary Available now as a Vimeo Stream or Free Download. [Click Here.](#)

g_editorial by Mike Reynolds

Life with the Holy Spirit is an everyday effort to put ourselves into a place of surrender, to listen to his voice, and to experience his presence. May this encourage you and edify you as children of God.

Here we go:

The last few times I have written I have discussed faith as the foundation of relationship with God, faith in his love. Now I want to talk about faith in his presence.

And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age. – Matthew 28:20 (NLT)

For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' – Hebrews 13:5 (NKJV)

So repent (change your mind and purpose); turn around and return [to God], that your sins may be erased (blotted out, wiped clean), that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord – Acts 3:19 (AMP)

Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God's presence. – Ephesians 3:12 (NLT)

I want to make this point as clearly as possibly, we have what we believe we have according to the truth. If God, who never tells lies, promises me something through scripture or personally then I have it when I believe I have it. I must believe in his nearness in the same measure that I believe in his love for me. Whatever I believe his distance to be will determine how I live and move and ultimately how I commune with God.

King David said:

You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore. – Psalm 16:11

Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? – Psalm 139:7

He understood that God is near and to be enjoyed constantly. He was not afraid to enter the presence of God, he knew that God accepted him. The next step after accepting God's love is to accept that you are accepted into his presence BECAUSE of his love. He will never reject you, because of Jesus' and what he accomplished on the cross. You forever have access to God's presence.

Moment by moment believe that he is present and act accordingly. Do not forget him, meditate on his nearness and accessibility on your own mount of transfiguration.

Mike Reynolds, guitarist, For Today.



Roots & Culture

Allan Aguirre

of Olive Trees & Wild Branches (Part 1)

My involvement with Punk Rock between 1978-85 has become a “badge of honor” and has garnered me the label of “authenticity.” This experience also carries the frustration of decades worth of genre hybrids and musical counterfeits that has branded everything “alternative,” warranted or not. Time, and time alone, has buried the essence of an era deep below the sands of conjecture and opinion.

The same can be said of our faith.

Centuries’ worth of hybrids and counterfeits that have branded everything “Christian,” warranted or not, defines us today. Time and culture have buried the essence of an ideal deep below the sands of conjecture and opinion. An ideal, once synonymous with a specific Root and Culture that defined it (much like the Ramones or the Sex Pistols defined Punk Rock), gives way today to roots and culture seeped in hybrid manifestations much like Avril Lavigne defining “punk rock” to a generation — a far cry from the original ideals represented by the X-Ray Spex.

The same can be said of our faith.

In Acts 24:14, Paul, while on trial in Jerusalem before the Roman governor Felix and the Sanhedrin, had this to say in his defense of his faith: “But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.” (NKJV) Christianity, (aka the Way), was considered a sect of Judaism and involved the belief of “all things which are written in the Torah (‘law’) of Moses and in the Prophets.” Quite a different “religion” than the one we practice today. It would behoove us to learn about this Way.

- I propose that 1900 years of Greek and Roman linear thought processes of a Jewish cyclical concept have buried the essence of an ideal deep below the sands of conjecture and opinion.
- I propose that we have fallen victim to the ripple effect of ramrodding a square peg into a round hole - disguised as doctrine - and have fallen short of the documented biblical responsibilities and results that this Way requires and produces.
- I propose that a life sold out to the biblical instruction of this Way, a Way
 - o followed by Paul and the original 11 disciples
 - o taught and modeled by the Jewish Messiah Himself
 - o established and founded on ‘all things which are written in the Torah of Moses and in the Prophets’
 would not only reestablish us on the intended foundational path instituted by our God, but it would also breathe sound scriptural Life into the New Creation that was bought with the shed Blood of the Lamb.

I propose we go back to our biblical Roots and Culture.

Paul, in Romans 11, establishes this root and culture as well as our roles as the wild olive branches that have been grafted into the cultivated Olive Tree of the House of Israel. This is a hybrid I can support and, because of the blood of Jesus, it’s not a counterfeit. It’s because of Jesus we are able to be grafted in. “But if some of the branches were broken off [Israel], and you - a wild olive [a gentile believer] - were grafted in among them [Jews] and have become equal sharers in the rich root of the olive tree, then don’t boast as if you were better than the branches [Jews]! However, if you do boast, remember that you are not supporting the root, the root is supporting you.” Romans 11:17-18 (emphasis mine)

Welcome to Roots and Culture...

[fb: allanAguirre]

REUNIONTOUR.

TALES FROM THE CONSERVATIVE UNDERGROUND

BY MATT FRANCIS

There's an old stereo-trope that has made resurgence in recent years due to movies featuring normal people reluctantly acquiring powers that can only be described as super: "Some pursue greatness, and others have greatness thrust upon them."

Saying I didn't fit in in high school is like saying the Pope is Catholic, yada yada, another abused cliché, and if not obvious, possibly an understatement. I went to a school of 300 kids in the back woods of Mid-Michigan. Our diversity count was half a black kid – literally, he was mixed—and a diminishing German exchange program that ended my sophomore year. The mindset seemed to proudly recall the South pre-Civil War or trail the most uncreative consumer culture to ever be invented; i.e. prep. You had cowboy hats, unironic Three Moon Wolf t-shirts tucked into skin-tight wranglers, and Confederate flags were the favored accessory. On the opposite end, you had kids worshipping at the church of American Eagle and Abercrombie, just waiting for the next piece of clothing to define them. They would broadcast the brand name across their chests so there was no guessing taste or social status and prove themselves indistinguishable from their friends. Of course, there were still the kids that wore Hobbit-cloaks to school or girls that dressed in kimonos to showcase their love for anime and all Japanese-culture.

I was not one of the above kid stereotypes that just defined 95% of my high school. I'm not going to say I was better, and I'm certainly not going to argue I was more advanced instead of devastatingly awkward. I was a transplant to the small-town (small-mind) scene, and if I had grown up in that environment all my life like most of them I probably would have developed similar tastes (and never left, like most of them). I had an intense love of science-fiction, trampolines, and Christian punk-rawk, and the latter is how I both consciously and unconsciously defined myself. I wore flannel to concerts, and I bought sun-glasses at dollar stores. I did this because of Bleach.

Bleach was an awkward looking band. I've often noted how ugly their members were. A classic example is the promo shots for their 2003 album *Astronomy*: the members are all situated behind the most attractive member, the drummer. The drummer has never gotten so much love. Lead-singer Davey Baysinger is dumped to the foreground, forsaking the typical frontman posing for someone with better facial bone structure and clearly better hair.

Bleach typified a kind of fashion that, my brother and I suggested at that time, was more telling of truck stops than popular rock and roll. Of course, this again points back to my early sheltered ignorance. I was used to seeing members of rock and roll bands with slicked up hair and leather for the cool factor, or torn jeans and t-shirts for calculated edginess, but always something that stated "I realize I am rock and roll. This clothing is a conscious attempt to say something about how rock and roll I am, even if that something is dressing in distressed thrift shop clothing to prove I am so rock and roll I don't care." Even tattoo sleeves, as I am finding, point to a significant monetary investment. Bleach had none of this. They looked like they were factory workers and truck drivers. They had a type of anti-fashion; beyond a conscious attempt not to care, I actually believed Bleach didn't care (this is before hipsters adopted this concept, mind you). I saw flannel, I saw thick rimmed glasses, and I saw bad hair cuts. This was new to me, and strangely, I pursued this fashion identity, branding myself as a poorly dressed kid (and probably just poor) with no edge whatsoever.

Now I come to realize that there was another little band that sprang up a few years before Bleach. They hailed from Seattle and played loud, distorted-fuzz filled music. They wore flannel and green thrift-store sweaters and didn't cut their hair. Maybe they named one of their albums after Bleach, even though Bleach first came on the music scene in '96, and theirs is from '89. Hmmmm...

My adolescent concert-going was like entering that part of a movie that hits you as so surreal, you suspect it's going to be revealed as a dream sequence. I would leave my bleak reality to attend a show where my tastes were exonerated, where I left the fringe for the inner circle. No one had it right at my high school, where I amounted to nobody (except, of course, the fact that I'm nobody). Suddenly I could let my guard down and be, not exist as a failed clone of the populace.

There was no band I saw more in concert, still to this day, than Bleach. This wasn't intentional at first. They just seemed to tour a lot and consequently be on every tour I attended, before I realized they were the highlight of the bill. Off the top of my head, I remember seeing them with seemingly every youth group-rock mainstay of the early Millennium: Switchfoot, Five Iron Frenzy, Relient K, Philmore, and the O.C. Supertones.

My love of Bleach, and Bleach live, culminated in their decision to disband in 2004. Announcing their farewell show in Nashville, Tennessee, I got in a van with three fat friends and one skinny guy and we set off, 500 miles for our destination. Suffering through the masochism of the shepherding van-driver (the eldest, the youth pastor who was in the process of getting fired—who had a propensity for the balls of his youth children [unrelated]), we eventually arrived in Nashville for Bleach's farewell. I'm sure it was but a ripple on the radar of popular music, but I realized a few things. Bleach's impact was far flung; we drove 500 miles and we weren't the farther journeymen there to say goodbye, and that's impressive for five guys who probably didn't give a second thought to their wardrobe at arguably their biggest show. That, and fat friends are great protection in a mosh pit.

Bleach didn't aspire for greatness as far as I know. It certainly wasn't thrust on them; there was no moment where they had to step up and prove their relevancy. They had a seemingly "safe" career within their alternative subset of modern Christian music. They were discovered by Audio Adrenaline in college, were signed to Forefront records (the Christian major label if there ever was one) and filled the void of casual grunge within their market so the CCM crowd could help Seattle cry. Hell, they even won a Dove award for their first album (the Christian equivalent to the Grammy). After three albums and some contemporary Christian radio hits, they settled onto Tooth and Nail Records, the more traditional Christian alternative label, and released three more records and a career retrospective.

But Bleach was great. Their landmark album, "Again, For The First Time," is the sound of five guys having fun. Now this could be attributed to them yelling things like "wooooo" and "suey" into the mic randomly throughout the record, but I choose to believe it's because they have the air of unassuming people playing unassuming rock music. Sometimes, that alone is the recipe for the by-product of greatness.

ask. seek. rock.

✕ ASK A MENTOR, SEEK ADVICE, ROCK YOUR CAREER ✕

BY RANDY SPENCER
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"If you can't fly then run, if you can't run then walk, if you can't walk then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward."

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

A fact of life (in addition to death and taxes) is rejection. The music business is filled with times of rejection and the artists that are persistent are the ones that survive long term. Whether you are pursuing a record deal, getting added to a music festival, trying to open a show for your favorite artist the likeliness of those things happening may be slim. There are over 14 million artists online promoting their music, many of them seeking the same opportunities that you are. There is not enough room for every record label, festival or tour date to say yes to every submission that they receive.

Receiving a record deal or getting the "big" opportunity does not validate your worth and it should not be your main motivation or objective. If those opportunities happen follow through and maximize the platform and thank God for opening the door for you. If they don't, make the most of the opportunities that are presented to you. Exposure is exposure whether big or small and you never know what may happen from an invitation to something. Build your fans one person at a time, network with the promoter and look at everything that you do, as a chance to grow and develop and have your music be better. Whether you are playing a large festival or a small venue, you can still impact people and offer them hope and encouragement. You don't have to have a record deal or be on a big tour to fulfill that "mission." God (who is in charge of our life and music career any way) is more than capable to change people's lives in ANY atmosphere. God is also amazingly capable of often surprising you with other opportunities, often in unexpected places (Jeremiah 29:11 and Ephesians 3:19-21).

Some of the most successful people in the world experienced failure prior to their success. Steve Jobs was fired from Apple before being re-hired and later revolutionizing the world. U2's first few albums hardly sold any records. Many well-known actors kept on acting in small movies before their break made them household names. Even in the midst of adversity, rejection or personal challenges we must keep focused on what God has called us to do. You must keep a belief and vision for your musical talent – you must keep moving! Keep writing, focus on networking, remain steady on making phone calls to promote your music – don't stay still! Staying idle will only diminish your chances of success and if you don't play that show, take that interview or show up at that conference; some one else will receive that opportunity (your dream).

I encourage each of you as you read this in the week ahead to keep on moving (2 Timothy 4:7, 8) – keep on networking, set goals and pursue reaching them. Please e-mail me and let us know your stories of moving ahead. I look forward to hearing them!

Randy Spencer has been in music publishing, management and A&R for over 20 years. He has represented artists such as Metallica bass player Jason Newsted, P.O.D. guitarist and songwriter Marcos Curiel, Stryper vocalist Michael Sweet, dc Talk vocalist Kevin Max and numerous other well known recording artists, songwriters and music producers. Say hello or ask for advice at randy@pitchmusic.com. Randy will answer questions in future articles.

PICK OF THE LITTER

Runaway Phoenix

What the heck would a band fronted by Alice Cooper's son (aka Dash Cooper) sound like? If you guessed a heavy dose of bright, snotty guitars, with a classic rock tilt, you guessed right. A tune off their debut EP, "Ladies of the '80s," shows a subtle influence of all that desert heat – a decidedly gritty glam rock influence sharpened by a pop punk sheen. Remember that *On The Cover II* promo photo of MxPx (the Poison shot – located at: <http://hm.realviewusa.com/?iid=24432>)? That's a good visual to describe what's going on sonically here, but don't make the mistake of thinking this bunch isn't serious. Save for the slow-me-down ballad probably written for the female desert rats in Arizona ("Invisible 2 U"), this is some pretty serious rock. Take away the near-celebrity status of Dash Cooper and his father's legacy and you still have another new batch of fun party rock. (Kern County Kid, The)

<myspace.com/runawayphoenix>

Pospolite Ruszenie

Some call it "Pagan Metal," but don't let the tag fool you. Perhaps the tamer "Polish Folk Metal" is more appropriate for this six-piece from the great country of Poland. Strings, folk vocal stylings, strings, a classic metal riff/bash and more strings are the creative blend here. While they play replicas of period instruments (like shawms, recorders, bagpipes, hurdy-gurdy, vielle, viola de gamba), it's fairly certain they don't smash these fine instruments, but they do play with almost an operatic/epic metal flair. (Doug Van Pelt)

<pospolite.ruszenie.pl>

☆ Benjamin Dunn and Friends

A great big breath of fresh air. Anathallo exploding in the sky with charming chiming guitars. I love this *Circus of Love* album. (DV)

<benjamindunnmusic.com>

☆ The Widow

Great, thought-out and thematic with varied vocal approaches. Brooding, sweeping, epic moments. (DV)

<facebook.com/thewidowband>

☆ Spottiswoode & His Enemies

A brilliant, slow and Tom Waits-ish travelog or theme-centered album (*Wild Goosechase Expedition*). RIYL Terry Taylor's solo music. (DV)

<spottiswoode.com>

☆ Of Virtue

Raw, rough and tough. Dynamic twists of atmospheric build-up and death metal screaming breakdowns. (DV)

<facebook.com/ofvirtue>

Faithful Unto Death

Not the most original band in the world, but plenty tough in the riffage and rhythm department. Fast, mad and hardcore metal. (DV)

<myspace.com/faithfuluntodeathmusic>

☆ Social Threat

Old school punk turned loose from Medicine Hat, Alberta (Canada). Fiery and melodic. Reminds me a lot of early Dogwood. (DV)

<thesocialthreat.com>

Mariette Davina

A beautiful voice that would fit perfectly into a gothic setting. Her self-titled solo album never quite jumps from the operatic and haunting melodies into anything heavy. It stays fairly centered in classical stylings, but it's quite captivating nonetheless. (DV)

<mariettadavina.com>

Hguols

Dynamic and orchestral black metal. Not bad at all for a one-man solo project by Thomas Eversole. (DV)

<barrenmeadowsrecordings.com>

☆ Neizbezhnost

Lovely and brilliant black metal with sweeping orchestral elements and blast beats everywhere. Incessant, consistent and brutal. (DV)

<metalforadarkworld.com>

Rob Carlton

This guy knows how to jam, so when he releases an album like *Seven Thunders*, you know it'll have some sweet guitar playing on it. The dude loves Hendrix, feedback, wah-wah and great tone. He does it all well. (DV)

<facebook.com/robcarltonfans>

This Night is Forever

This band is insane and loves to have a good time. One listen to their tune "Lady Gaga" with breakdowns will give you a good pop punk-influenced laugh. Shoulda been on a *Punk Goes Pop* album. (DV)

<myspace.com/thisnightisforever>

Dividing the Masses

Nice and shrill black/death/black vocals. (DV)

<myspace.com/dividingthemasses>

A man in a red t-shirt and jeans stands with his arms raised in a gesture of praise or surrender. Behind him is a large, glowing white figure with its arms outstretched, set against a background of red, textured, and splattered patterns. The overall image has a high-contrast, almost halftone or dithered appearance.

"Come now, let us reason together,"
says the LORD.

"Though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red as crimson,
they shall be like wool.

Isaiah 1:18